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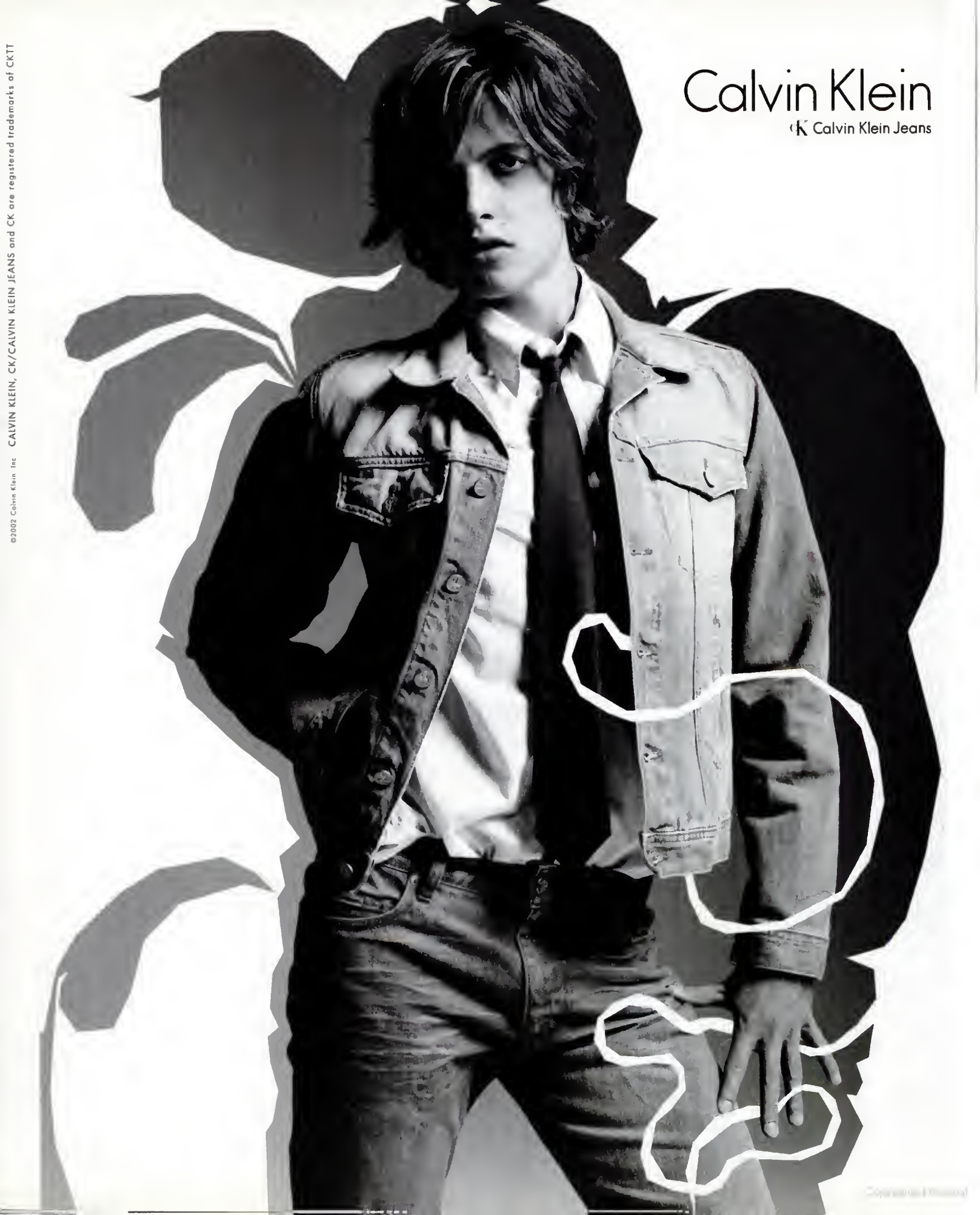




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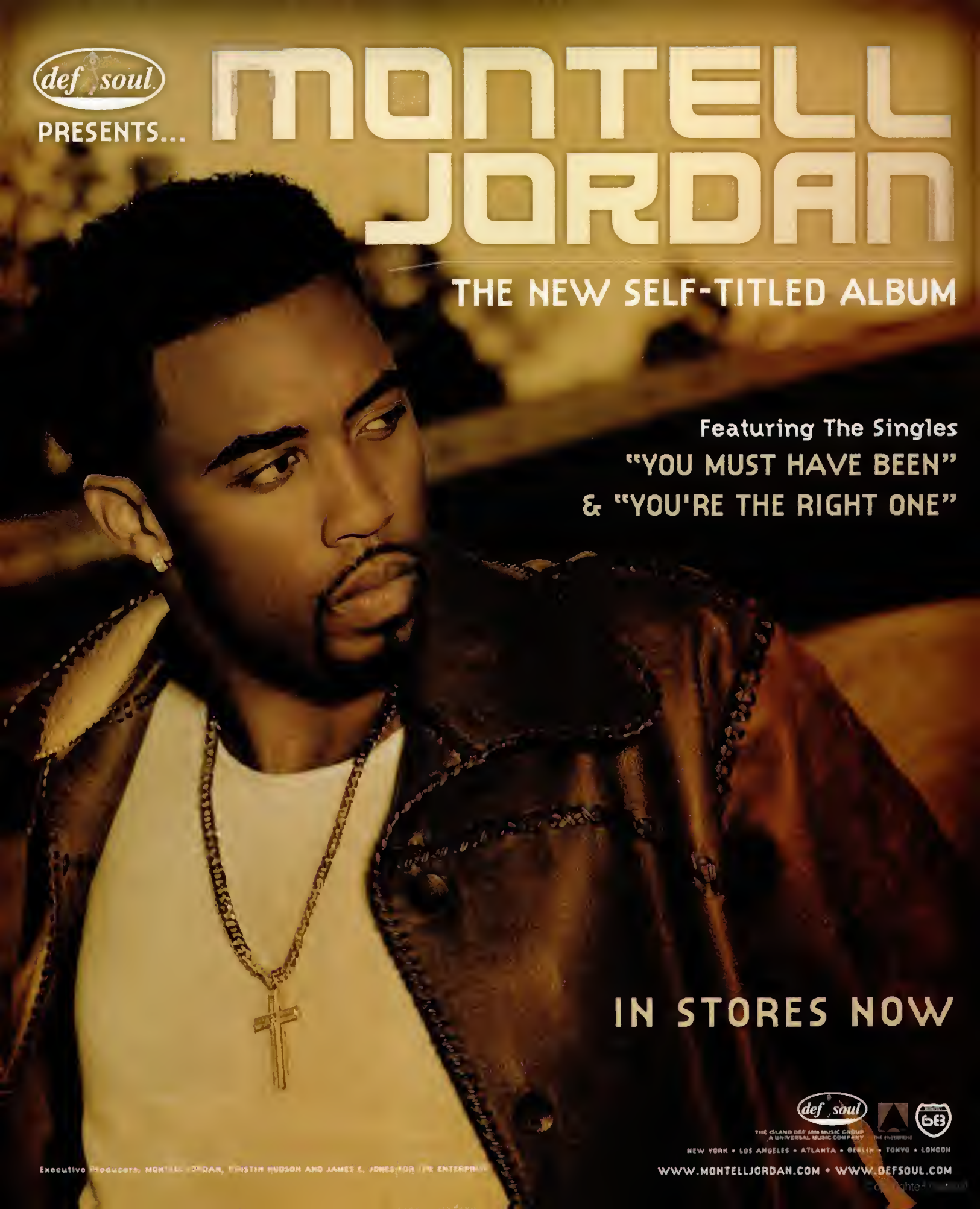
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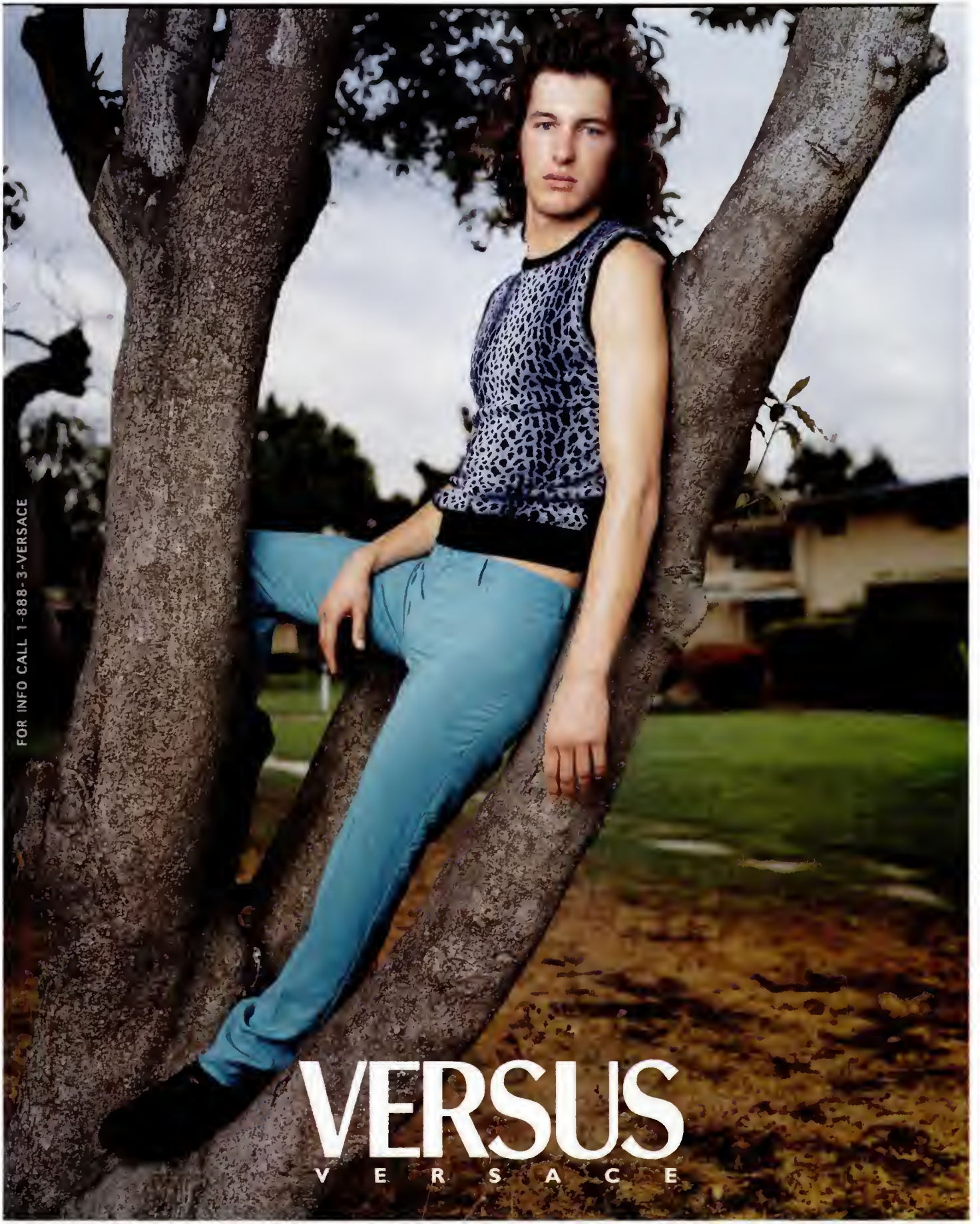
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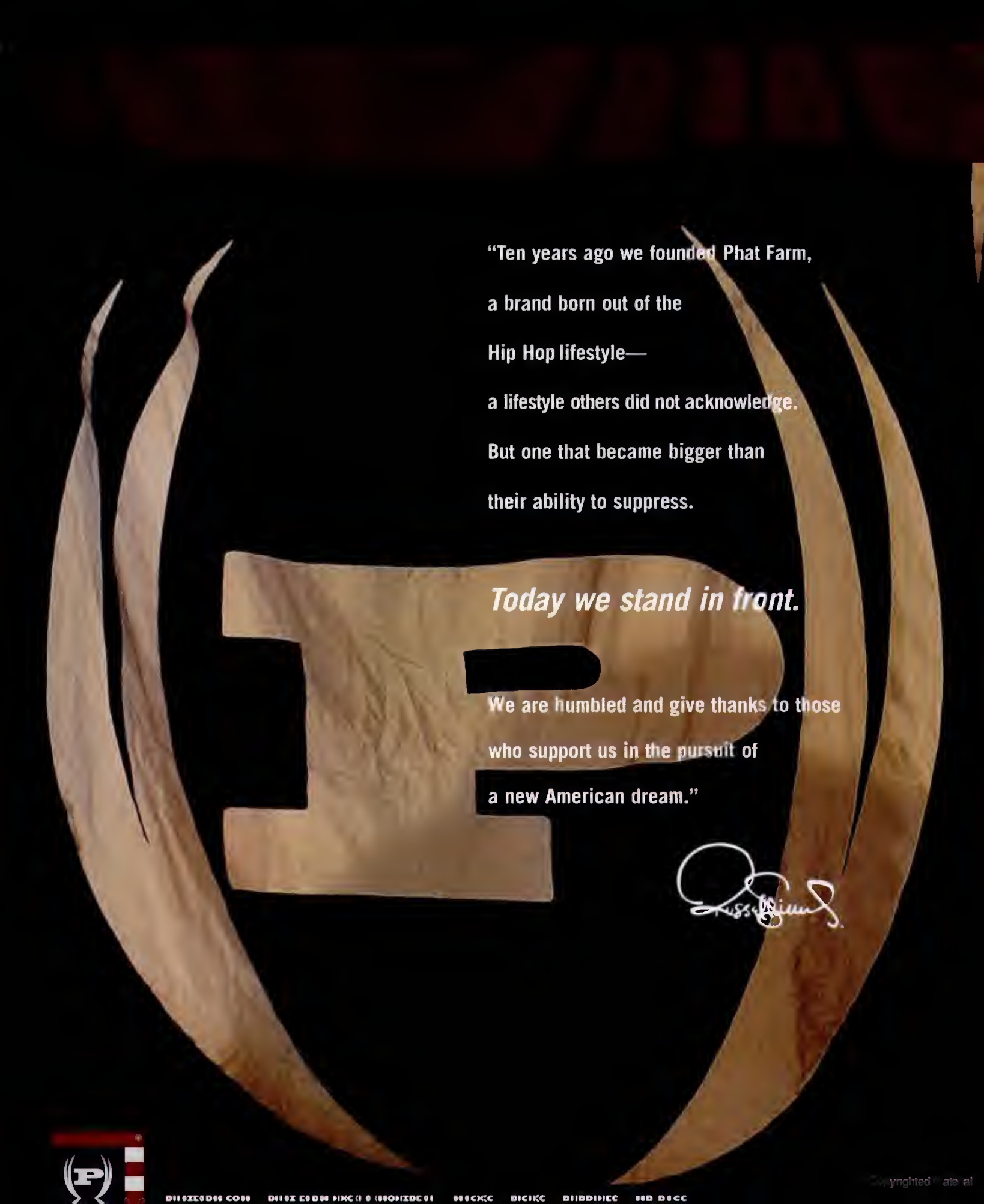
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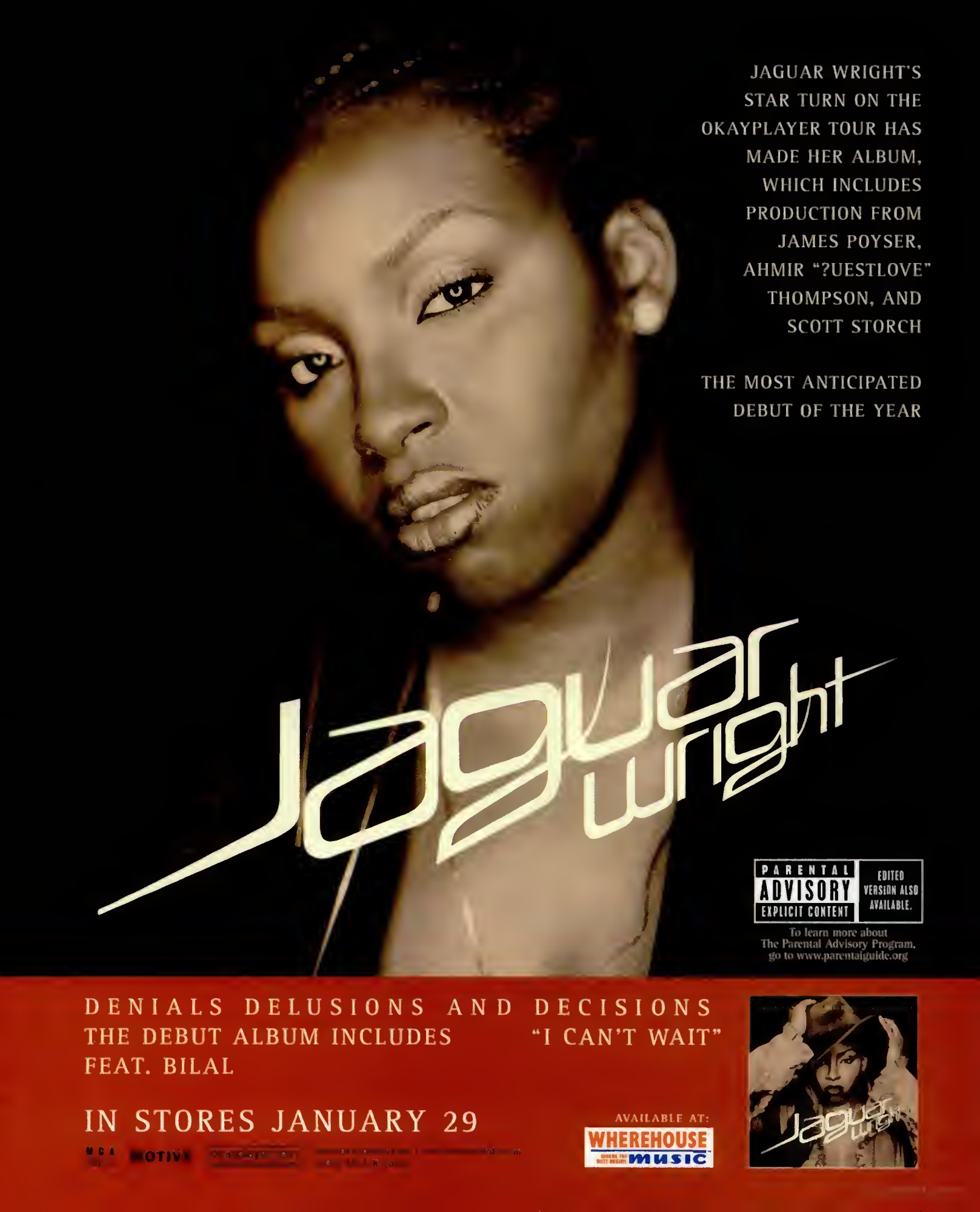
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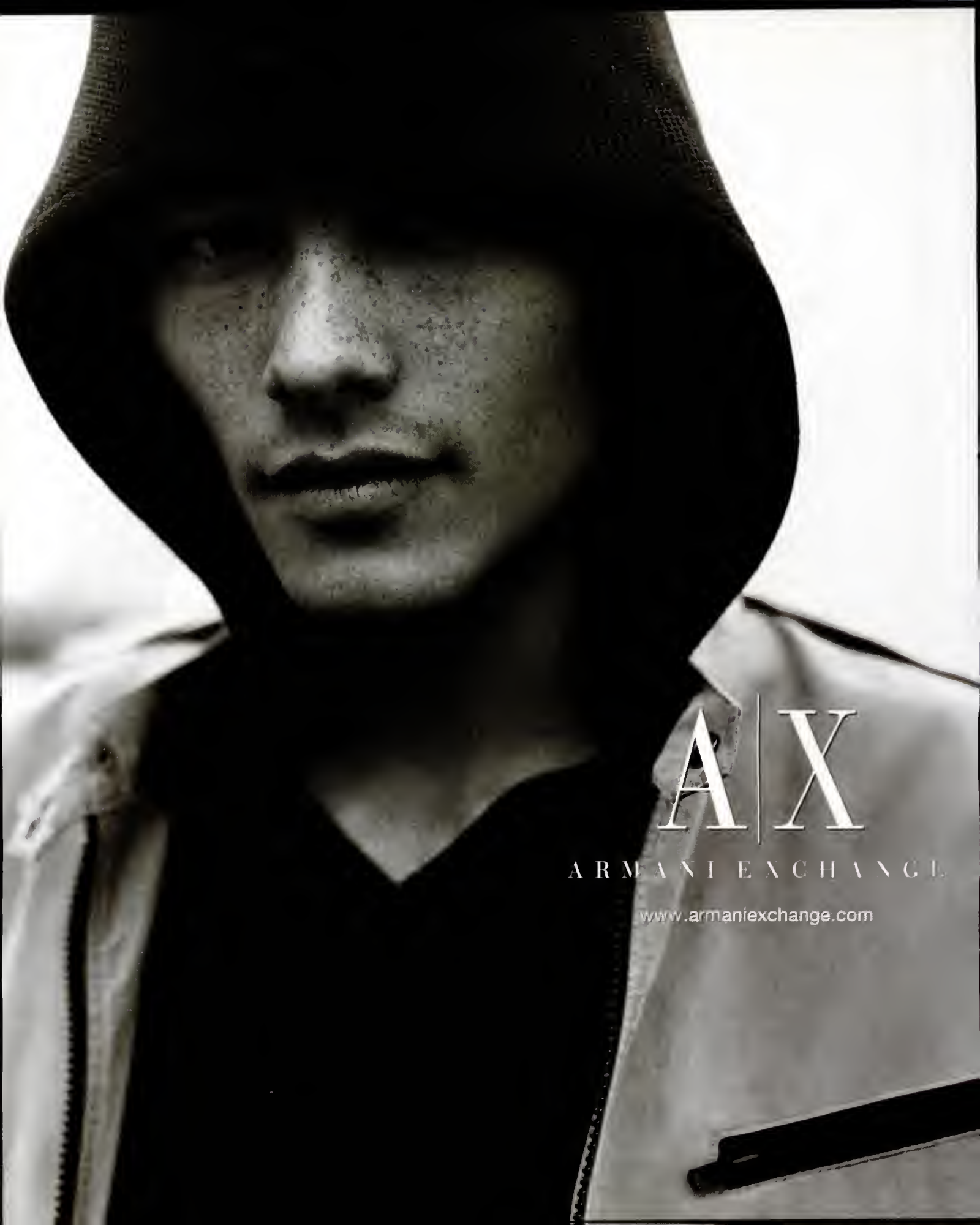

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ON THE COVER AND BELOW: MICHAEL JACKSON ("Unbreakable," page 108) photographed exclusively for VIBE by **Jonathan Exley.** Styling by Michael Bush and Dennis Tompkins; makeup by Karen Faye; hair by Janet Zeitoun



THE FASHION ISSUE

FEATURES

108 **UNBREAKABLE** Don't call it a comeback. **MICHAEL JACKSON** has been here for three decades. The chart-topping success of *Invincible*, his first album in four years, proves that Michael has risen above the legal conflicts and tabloid vilification of the '90s to rediscover his magic touch. What's next for the King of Pop? *By Regina Jones. Photographs by Jonathan Exley*

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DAWN ROBINSON ("Funky Diva," page 126) photographed exclusively for VIBE by **Isabel Snyder.** Styling by Laura Duncan/Art Mix; makeup by Erin Ayani/Cloutier; hair by Daniel Howell/Magnet. Pink fur jacket by Richard Tyler; pink lace bra by Agent Provocateur; blue denim pant by Serfontaine; black leather shoes by Giuseppe Zanotti; black and silver studded leather belt by Sharagano; silver fang ring by Michael Schmidt; silver dagger necklace by Erica Anenberg

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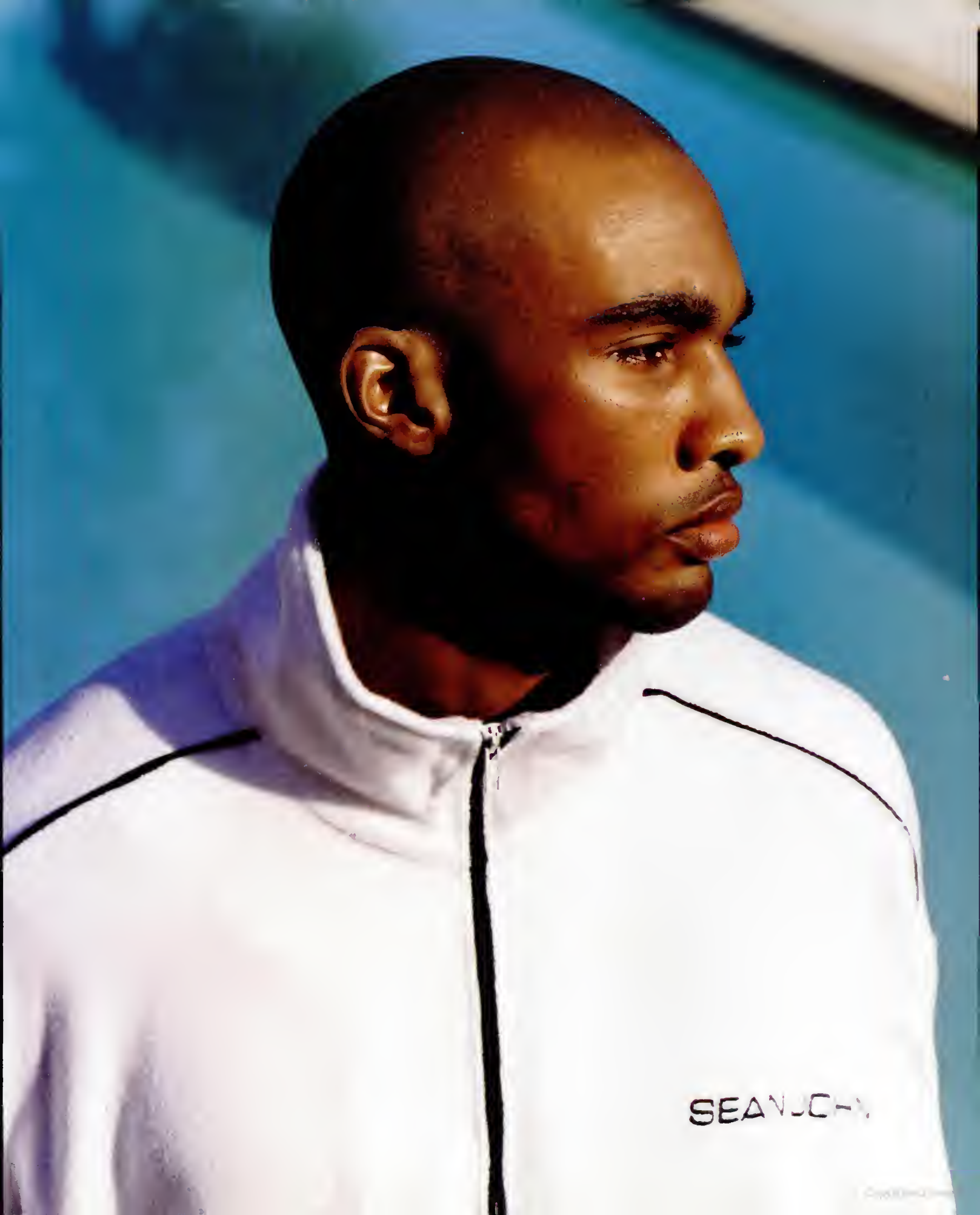


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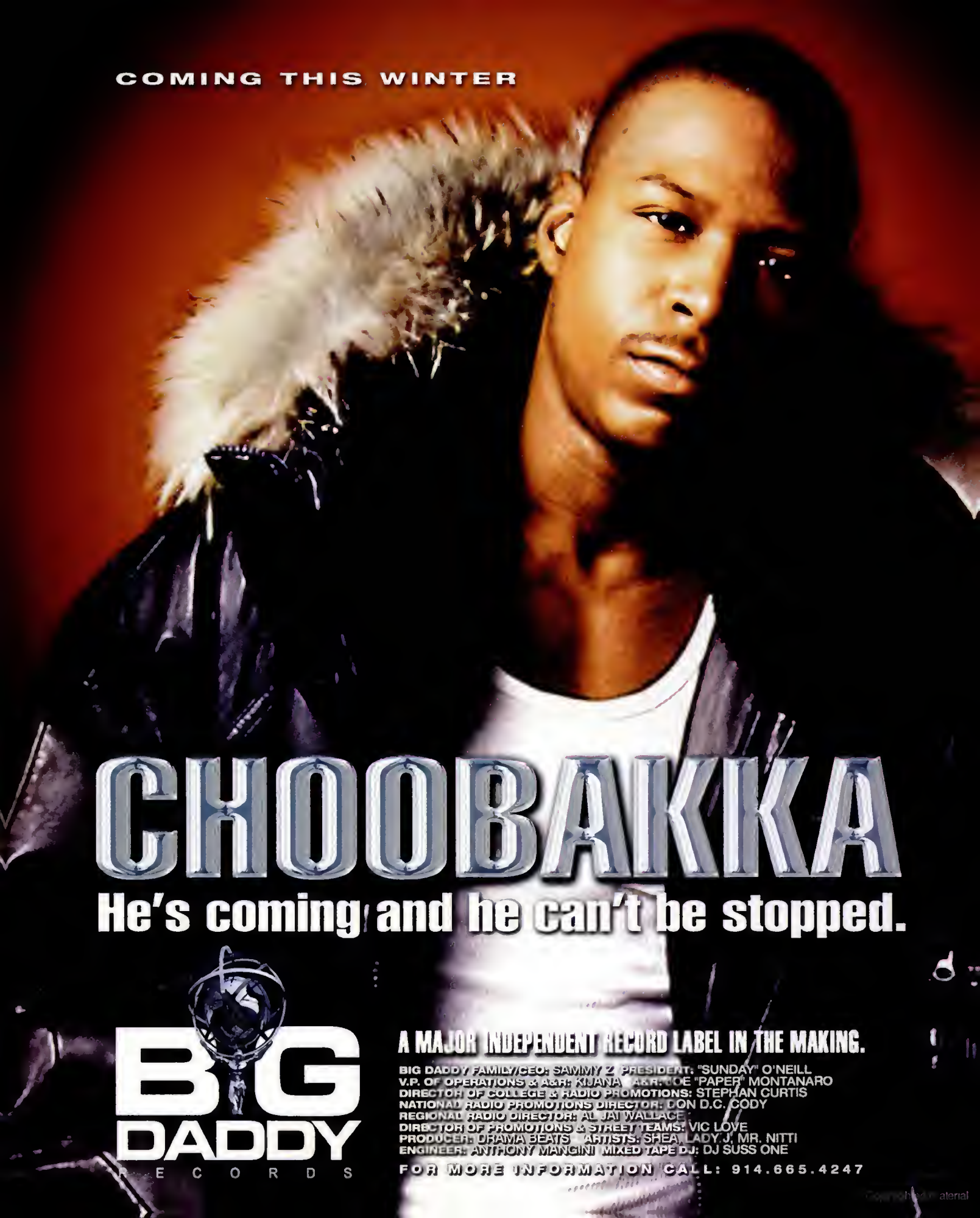
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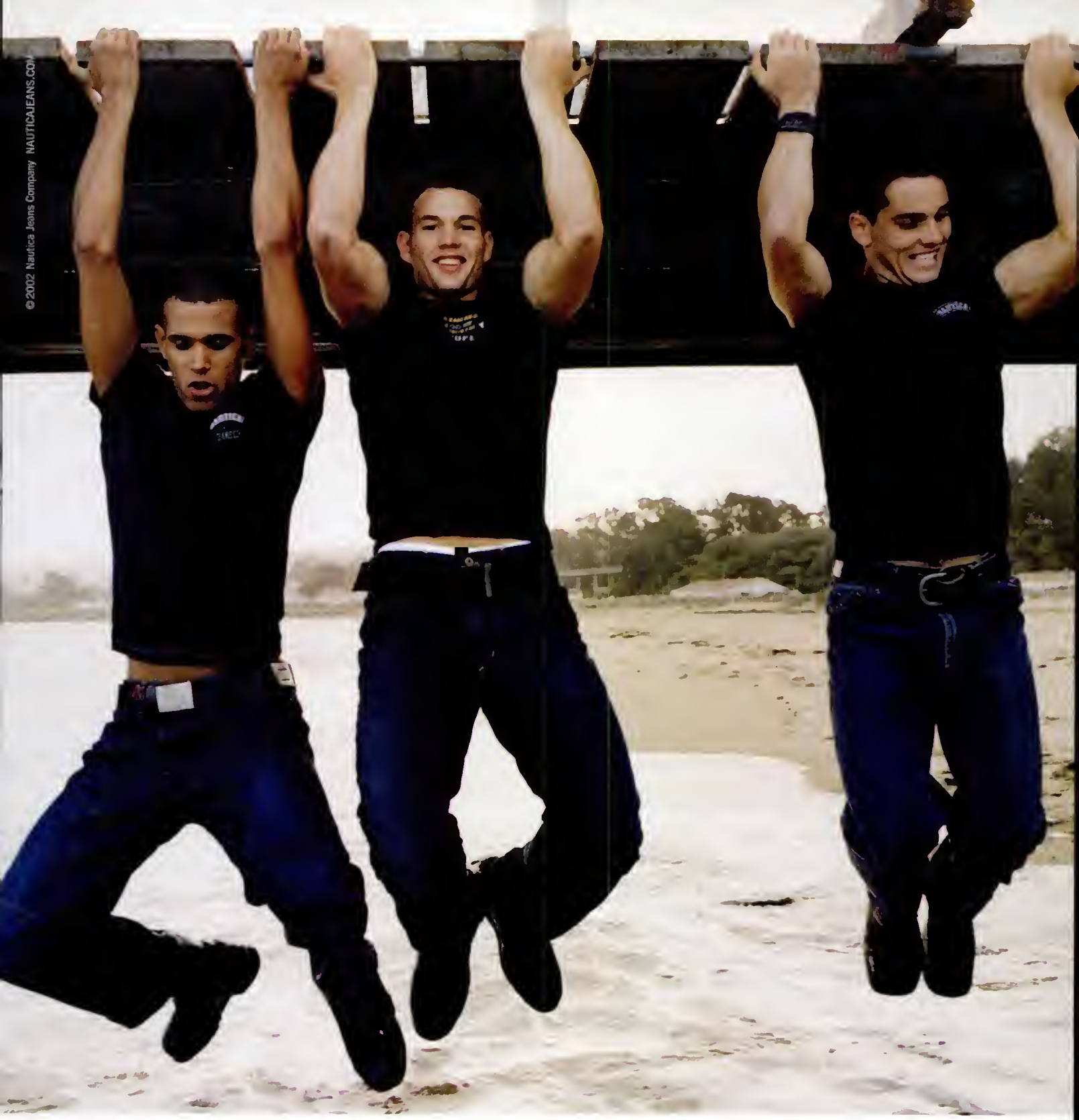
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SAM GOODY'S
GOT THEIR EAR TO THE STREET

This month's lineup of new releases is looking really juicy. And they're all available at your local Sam Goody store. Def Jam's R&B imprint, Def Soul, starts out 2002 by dropping **Montell Jordan**'s soulful self-titled album. On "You're the Right One," MJ serves up some ol'-school flava reminiscent of Tony, Toni, Tone. "Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda" and "You Must Have Been" are some of the other lovely tracks.

R&B soloist **Tweet** debuts this month with her album *Southern Hummingbird*, on Missy Elliott's Goldmind label. This falsetto talent is like a breath of fresh air. Her mesmerizing, hot tracks include "Always Will" and "Beautiful." Her Prince-like delivery on "Best Friend" is entrancing.



Recently, **N.O.R.E.** dropped his new set *Grimey...God's Favorite*, and it's bumpin'. N.D.R.E. has always had mad talent, and his work with the Neptunes and Swizz Beats on this album has taken him to the next level. He sounds ready for this ascension on "Nahmeanyaheard, spitting the lyrics "I was on a record label that love to lose/No promotion lucky when we hit the news."

I had to do a double-take as I was listening to **Glenn Lewis**'s new joint *World Outside My Window* to make sure someone hadn't slipped in a Stevie Wonder CD. This brother made some noise on the "Red Star Sounds" Epic compilation. Glenn's honey-dipped vocals on such tracks as "Never Too Late" and "Simple Things" really grab the listener.

The soulful duo **Pam & Dodi** dropped their self-titled set earlier this year. (Think Changing Faces meets Mary, Mary.) Listening to this LP, it's obvious these ladies honed their skills in church. Tracks like "What's Wrong" and "Forgive Me" showcase their excellent voices, and on "I Appreciate You," the duo embrace their long and rewarding relationship with God.

The street date for the **Royce Da 5' 9"** project *Rock City* has done more moving than a military brat, but it turns out this album was worth the wait. Don't be scurred when you listen to "Scary Movies," cuz he's bringin' it. The verbal assault continues on tracks such as "We're Live (Danger)" and "You Can't Touch Me".

The **X-ecutioners** vicious *Built From Scratch* is a mindblowing project. Hip hop purists will be feelin' this joint—no doubt. These turntable titans go bananas on such amazing tracks as "X-ecutioner's Scratch," "A Journey Into Sound," and "Let It Bang." MOP, Inspectah Deck, and Pharoah Monche add their considerable talents to this album.

Houston native **Lil Keke** recently dropped his new album, *Platinum in da Ghetto*, a good name for this gem of a release. The standout tracks on this set are "Cowgirl," where Lil Keke expresses his preference for voluptuous shorties. "Love for Ya" and "Where My Dog At" are also worth checkin' out.

Unsigned but skilled talent from the South is showcased on Loud Records' *Southern Compilation*. On the "Freeway" track new artist Jatis sounds like he's been spending some time with Outkast. "That's Love," from the sole featured female rapper Georgia Brown, is a nice tune. This 14-track set is beaming with fresh, new talent, including Lil Flip, Grandaddy Souf, and Yung-N.

On March 12, LBC native **Knoc-Turn'al** drops his new joint *Knoc's Landin'*. The first single, "Knoc," is a catchy track with a nurserylike beat tempered with Dr. Dre's signature production style. Knoc-Turn'al navigates through his verse in a laid-back but sharp manner. This project is tight fa' shizzel.

Mix king **Funkmaster Flex** released his new venture *60 Minutes of Funk: The Mixtape: Volume V* last month. On the first single, "Respect Carter," Flex masterfully uses a sample from Diana Ross's "Love Hangover". Top-notch artists such as Lil' Kim, LL Cool J, Black Rob, Alicia Keys, and Fat Joe are featured on this album.

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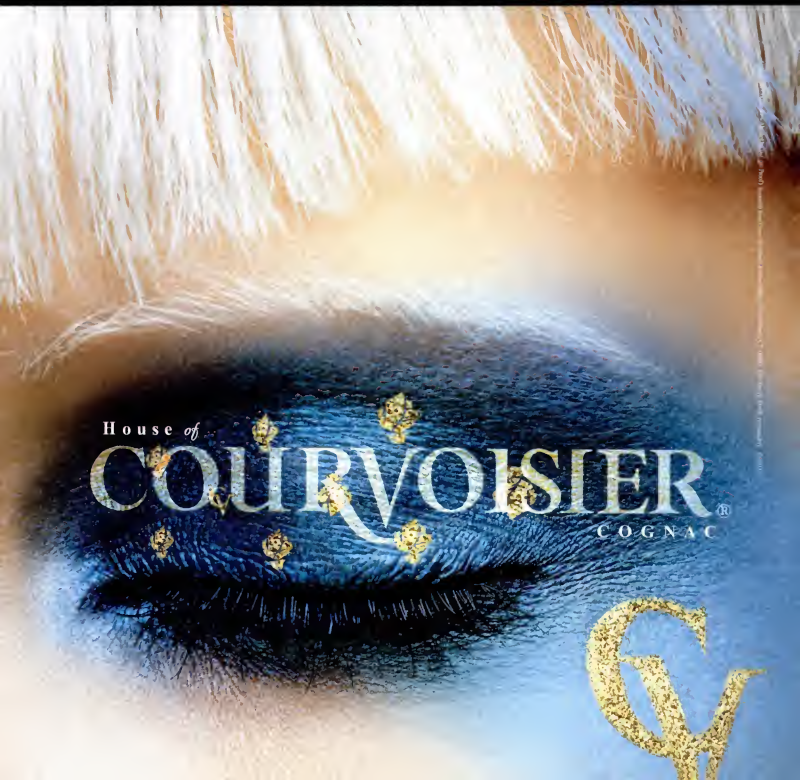
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UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Lovely is the feelin' now / Fever, temperatures risin' now / Power (ah power) is the force, the vow / That makes it happen / It asks no questions why (ooh) / So get closer (closer now) to my body now / Just love me 'til you don't know how
"Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough"–Michael Jackson, *Off the Wall* (1979)

Michael Jackson is a case study in cultural consciousness–our own, that is. No matter how much he transforms himself, or demands to be referred to as the King of Pop, or hides away at his enchanted Neverland Ranch with his children, Prince and Paris, real urban-music heads are not mad at Michael Jackson. We love him, unconditionally. Just ask Jay-Z, who rolled out onstage with MJ at New York's Hot 97 Summer Jam concert last year; or Usher, whose whole approach to choreography and performance is based on Jackson's; or Missy Elliott, whose video inspiration traces directly to the seminal "Thriller" clip; or rockers Alien Ant Farm, who recently hit the top of the charts with their rendition of "Smooth Criminal." And don't forget Chris Tucker, who has been paying homage to Michael since his *Def Comedy Jam* days.



GOT TO BE THERE: Michael in the early '80s

Helpless like a baby / Sensual disguise / I can't help but love you / It's getting better all the time
"I Can't Help It"–Michael Jackson, *Off the Wall* (1979)

The bottom line is that no matter what Michael Jackson looks like on the outside, he is still, on the inside, the same black boy from Gary, Ind., who became a superstar. We grew up with Michael. He helped shape our cultural identity and gave us social liberation. He wowed us as the young, bright, Afroed leader of the Jackson 5. Who could forget the variety show on CBS or the *The Jackson 5ive* cartoon series? His theme song to the 1972 movie *Ben*, a tale about a young boy and his best friend (who was literally a rat), made us cry. We vividly remember signature songs like "ABC," "I'll Be There," and of course, "Dancing Machine" ("Why don't you get down? / Why don't you get down? / Why don't you get, get, get, get, get / Dancing machine?"). *Off the Wall* helped shape our teenage sense of self with its carefree flow and liberating lyrics. We endlessly mimicked the *Motown 25* special's moonwalking scene. And then there was *Thriller*.

For the last several months, people have repeatedly asked me if or when we would put Michael Jackson on the cover of VIBE. We did it before in 1995, and now we're doing it again. Michael Jackson is one of the founding fathers of urban music. What other artist has sold 57 million albums and won 13 Grammys and 21 American Music Awards? Michael represents the urban dream. He's a supremely talented singer and dancer, a responsible single parent, artistically and financially successful, and his little sister is fine (and fierce! Remember "Scream"?). Like the sidewalk that lit up in the "Billie Jean" video, Michael paved the way for Whitney Houston, Destiny's Child, R. Kelly, and countless other R&B artists who have been able to cross over and yet retain their urban roots. Michael knows this. That's why VIBE is the only music magazine cover that he is doing in conjunction with the release of his 11th solo album, aptly titled *Invincible*.

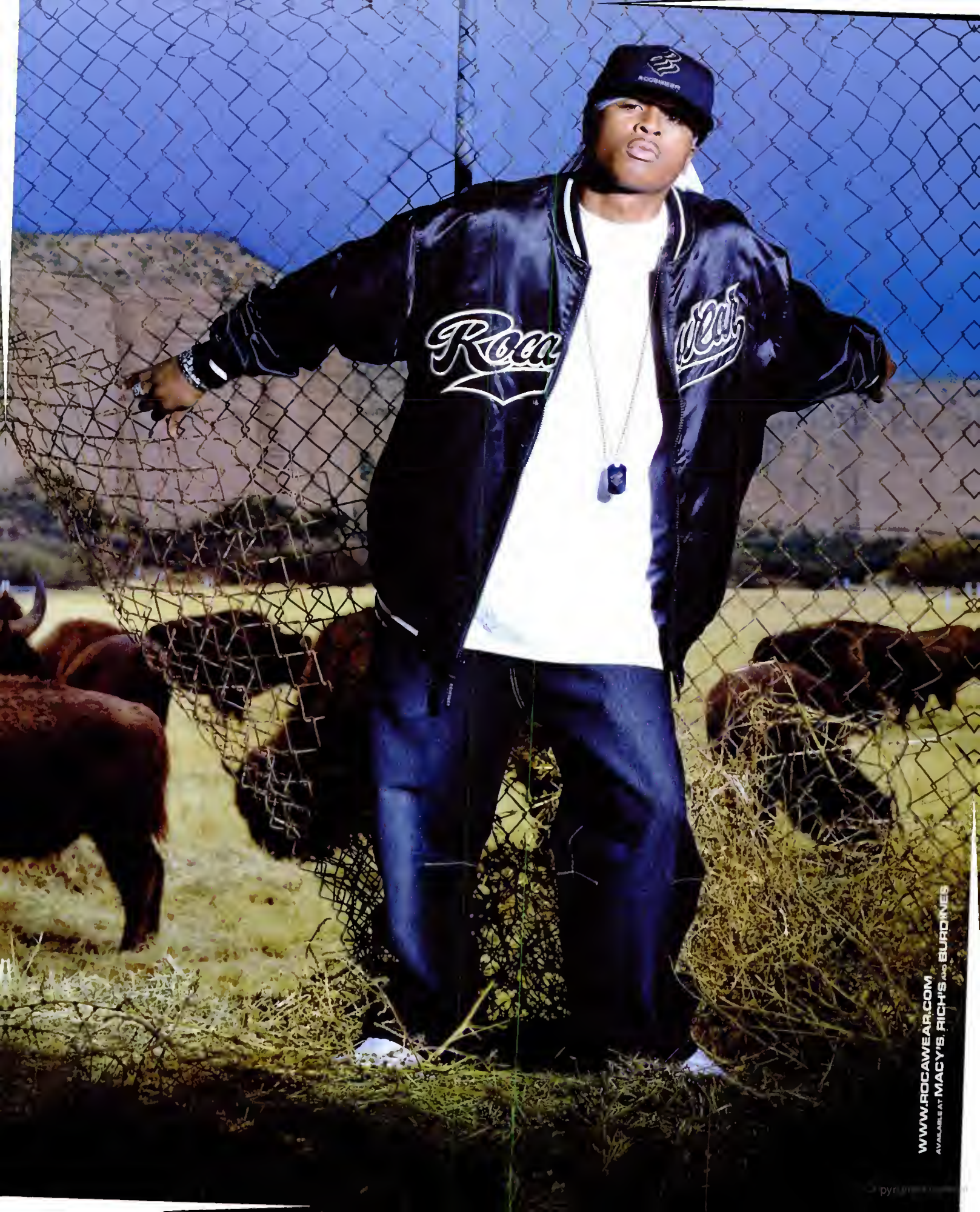
The other big question I've been getting from friends, music and fashion industry folks, and VIBE readers is: "What do you think about *Invincible*?" I like it. The album reminds me of old Michael, but I think it's going to take a few years before people really appreciate it. The opening track, "Unbreakable," has that Michael Jackson beat that just makes you want to dance. Like "Jam," "Remember the Time," and "Bad," the song has that club-rockin' feel. And then there's the rhyme that Biggie drops. "Heartbreaker" has that "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" or "Dangerous" feeling. As for the first two singles, "You Rock My World" and "Butterflies," I think they are safe, successful songs, but don't really exercise Michael's supersonic musical force–the power and energy that animate his wailing Wooo-hooos! My jam on this album is "Break of Dawn." This is classic Michael. There are birds chirping, a cool thumping beat, strings, flutes, and the voice I remember from "Man in the Mirror," "Liberian Girl," and "Human Nature." You *feel* this song. And post-September 11, these lyrics–with their promise of hope, love, and magic–are comforting and freeing. "Break of Dawn" displays Michael's true ability to touch our lives and our hearts with the passion in his voice. We love you, Michael...but we know you love us more.

EMIL WILBEKIN
Editor-in-Chief

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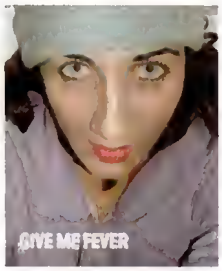


THE GUEST LIST



Twenty-six-year-old lensmen **Daniel Gabbay** ("Modern Love," page 150), appreciates the paintings of Francis Bacon and the photography of Richard Avedon. He lives in New York City and shoots for *Dutch* and *V*, among other magazines. But what really turns Gabbay on is grabbing his surfboard and shooting a pipeline: He peddles everywhere, from Long Island's Montauk Point to Mexico, Costa Rica, and his native Israel—"anywhere there are waves," he says.

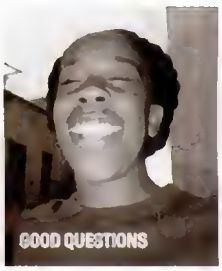
Cleveland transplant **Sarah A. Friedman**, 33, endured a high-grade fever to capture the frenzy of Carnival in Trinidad ("Party Over Here," page 142). On better days, she teaches beginning and editorial photography at her alma mater, Manhattan's School of Visual Arts; handles projects like Mystikal's new album cover and assignments for *ESPN* magazine and Seventeen; and relaxes, she says, by "keepin' it gully with my peeps in BK."





The photography of Londoner **Phil Knott**, 34, runs the gamut: elephant-polo matches in India, Versace ad campaigns, and customized bicycle clubs in his new home, N.Y.C. ("Born in the U.S.A.," page 158). Knott, who considers himself a disciple of French fashion photographer and videographer Jean-Baptiste Mondino, has lots coming up in 2002: a retrospective book and exhibition, and a role in launching what he calls "an eclectic travel magazine."

Texas-raised, Howard-educated, Brooklyn-based bon vivant **Karen R. Good**, 31, takes an anthropological approach to her research and writing, and she's not afraid to explore big-picture questions—like why Michael Jackson has such a hold on us ("Black Skin, White Mask," page 114). The VIBE veteran's work also appears in *The Village Voice*, *Interview*, and *New York* magazine, and her first book, *Field Hand: An Exploration of Cornrows in the Bush Era*, will debut next spring from Crown.



IN-HOUSE COUNSEL



Patricia Carter's mission is clear: "I make people sound as intelligent as possible." To that end, VIBE's erudite, 49-year-old copy chief from Tinton Falls, N.J., applies her Rutgers University education and her decade's tenure at Fairchild Publications (*W* and *WWD*) to the task of making sure our text reads in a clean, clear, and consistent style. Off-hours, Carter likes to read modern fiction (Isabel Allende, Toni Morrison), sew ("little outfits for my grandniece and nephew"), and tend to her two "crazy cats" (CC Rider and Zazu). Here, kitty!

CARTER: JULIE SUH

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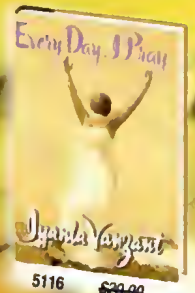
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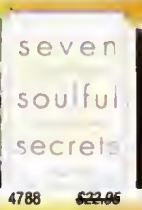
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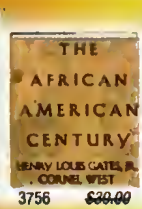
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VIBE RATERS

CHECK OUT THE *VIBE* STAFF'S CURRENT PLAYLIST



◀ **ANGIE STONE,** *Mahogany Soul* (J Records): Heavenly soul goddess.

JOE, "Let's Stay Home Tonight" (Jive): That's a plan!

PINK FLOYD, *Wish You Were Here* (Capitol): Pass the bong.



◀ **DAMIAN "JR. GONG" MARLEY,** "It Was Written" (Motown): Making dad proud.

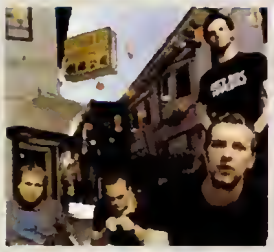
MASTA ACE, "Every Other Day" (JCOR): Ill street anthem.

STAIND, *Break the Cycle* (Flip/Elektra): Aggro with emotion.



◀ **FAT JOE,** *Jealous Ones Still Envy (J.O.S.E.)* (Terror Squad/Atlantic): Brolic Bronx banger.

SHUGGIE OTIS, *Inspiration Information* (Luaka Bop): For the bruised.



◀ **COLDPLAY,** "Trouble" (Capitol): Spare, simple sounds.

SCOTT WALKER, "Farmer in the City" (Drag City/Mercury): Sinatra on acid.



MARY J. BLIGE, *No More Drama* (MCA): Peace and love.

◀ **PETEY PABLO,** *Diary of a Sinner: 1st Entry* (Jive): A naughty confessional.

VARIOUS ARTISTS, *Ultra Chilled* (Ultra): Lounge, max, relax.



◀ **WHITNEY HOUSTON,** "You Give Good Love" (Arista): Good ol' days.

JUNIOR, "Mama Used to Say," (Mercury): Don't you rush....

Music listed in no particular order

MARLEY: KWAKU ALSTON; FAT JOE: PIOTR SIKORA



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RULE IS LOVE

The record sales and mass popularity tell the complete story: Ja Rule is a formidable artist. Giving him the VIBE of the Year Best Solo Artist Award ["Big City of Dreams," by Lola Ogunnaike, January 2002] did the hardworking rapper justice. Ja Rule maintains his thug image for the homies, but he also incorporates a twist of R&B appeal in his music. The little man with the big voice will continue to make great hits.

Hassan R. Mims
Tallahassee, Fla.

Your January issue was absurd! The idea that Ja Rule could be considered the best *anything* is proof positive that hip hop is at its creative nadir. Ja is nothing more than a lame Tupac impersonator. But I can't hate on him—he's just trying to get paid. I do expect more from your magazine, though, especially after previous issues in which you've criticized hip hop's lack of creativity. It's great when a magazine has the guts to criticize its subject, but that criticism is nullified when you continue to glorify artists with no value whatsoever. You must realize that VIBE is just as much a participant in hip hop as any MC. Like the broader culture, hip hop is at a crossroads. At this point, you're either part of the problem or part of the solution. And if anything can help bring forth that solution, this magazine can.

Phonzie Davis
Westerville, Ohio

I loved the story about Ja Rule. He is very talented, and I wish him success. But I have to say I hate how his insecure wife hated on the women in his videos. Just because a woman wants to be in a video doesn't mean she's a bitch. If a woman can make her money dancing half naked in a video, why should she dance completely naked at a strip club? I have never been in a video, but I feel Ja's wife owes every woman who is trying to eat an apology.

Avontae B.
Miami, Fla.

Ja Rule should do more than five albums before he quits. All the haters who call him a fake Tupac/DMX need to stop drinking that Haterade. Ja Rule has his own style, and he is far from a one-hit wonder. Ja, keep doing your thing and brush the haters off your shoulders, because Jeffrey Atkins *RULE*s.

Juanika H.
Detroit, Mich.

I want to make a comment to Ja Rule's wife about the "bitches" that Ja Rule is around when he's working on videos or at a club flossin': I would rather have a man who takes damn good care of me and does his thing on the side, than have one who doesn't do shit for me but still does his thing on the side. Either way, 95 percent of men are going to cheat—that's just the way it goes. Stop nagging that man. Just tell him to put a condom on when he's out "working" and keep the cash flowin' into the account.

Nya
Cleveland, Ohio

I understand Ja Rule's wife, Aisha. It's hard to be married to a popular, successful, good-looking rap artist. I applaud her for being strong enough to see Ja Rule in videos with other women. It takes a lot of love and unlimited dedication to do what she does.

LaTasha Henderson
Inglewood, Calif.

TUPAC'S LEGACY

Thank you for printing the most remarkable Tupac story ["Missing You," by Malcolm Venable, January 2002]. Out of all the articles and TV specials based on the slain rapper's life and career, this one is the best. Tupac was truly a remarkable man. He still is. You can bury a man's body, but you can't bury his soul. Even though his lyrics may appear hateful to many, Tupac is still one of America's realest MCs.

Adriann Wilson
Miami, Fla.



YOUR BEST SHOT

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MAIL

'Pac was a strong black man who taught through his gift of gab. The way he was brought up made him powerful, but his chosen "thug life" and his image couldn't have prevented his demise. He wasn't put on this earth just to make music and shake up the industry; he was here to be a Martin Luther King Jr. or a Malcolm X for our generation through his music.

William Baker
El Paso, Texas

Tupac is a legend. He was when he was breathing and still is after his death. He made known the pain of oppressed young black males. Many black males suffer from being in such hostile surroundings that a life of crime, law resistance, or straight thuggin' is like being released from oppression. We relate to Tupac because he was able to tell the whole world what we as young black males go through when victimized. Some may say Tupac is dead. Better not let me hear ya, 'cause in my eyes he is very much alive. 'Pac, if you happen to be reading this, I just got to tell you: I love you, bro. I feel as if you are my twin brother. . . . We still thuggin'!

Djvan Carter
Greensboro, N.C.

Reading your article on Tupac (R.I.P.), I was somewhat disturbed to see the N-word still being used as a free form of expression, especially in regard to the deceased. I'm well aware of First Amendment rights, and am not singling out the writer of this story, but a lot of people have died because of this word and the many derivatives of it.

Sean Pierce
Jamestown, Calif.

STILL THE GREATEST

Muhammad Ali was a legend ["The Greatest," by David Thigpen, January 2002]. He gave people of color a reason to feel good about themselves. Ali played the dozens like no one else could and followed his moral path by refusing to fight in Vietnam. Will Smith has a lot of Ali's qualities, but this is the greatest challenge of his life as an actor. I haven't seen *Ali*. If it turns out that Michael Mann failed to give Ali his due, and Will Smith fucked up, it won't be pretty.

Rodney Z. Horton
Cincinnati, Ohio

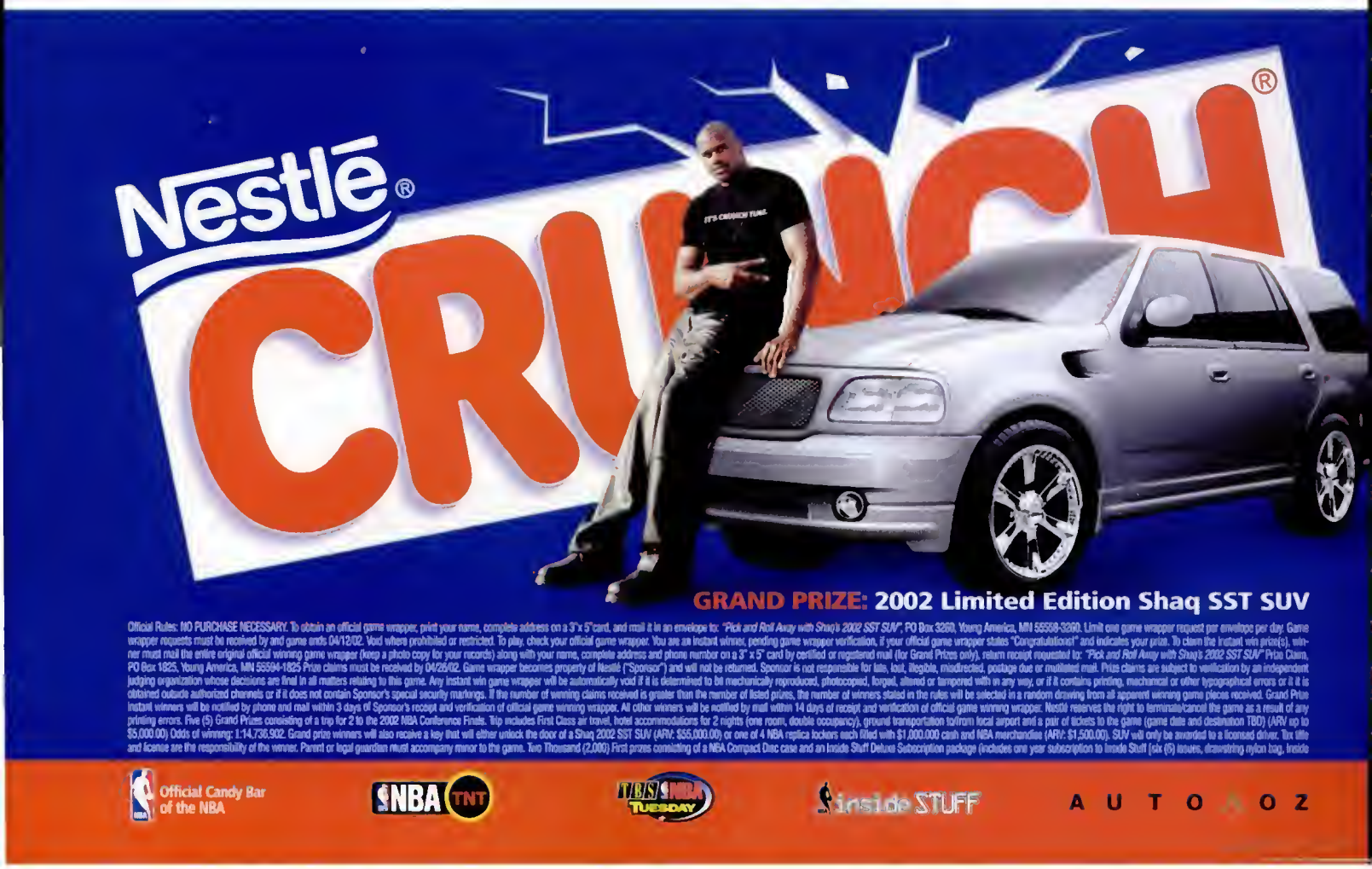
GET NAS-TY

With all the beef happening around the world today, I can't believe that people are still focusing on who's the better artist, who's wack, who's the King of Pop, and all that other jazz ["A/B Conversation," January 2002]. Jay-Z and Nas are both very talented artists. The least of our worries should be petty crap like this. Why can't we just sit back and enjoy all music, no matter who or where it's coming from? If you don't like what you're hearing, change the radio station.

Ginnie T.
Detroit, Mich.

THE GAME IS REAL

I was happy to see you giving us news about drug laws and their effects on people's lives [Start, "Crack Down," by Serena Kim, January 2002]. There is a war going on, and I don't mean the one in Afghanistan. I'm talking about the drug war that's happening right here in our own backyards. The targets are not foreign terrorists, but our own country's people. Two million Americans are in prison, and two-thirds of those are African-American and Latino. I believe your magazine has the ability to reach and influence young minority adults who are the prime victims of these insane drug laws. We have a



responsibility to let them know that selling drugs and living the "gangsta" lifestyle is not the get-quick-money-and-mad-respect scheme some may think it is. They need to know that when you get caught selling drugs, you will go to prison. Nine out of 10 times there will be no immediate second chances. Bottom line: Selling drugs is not the easy way to get what you want, because you will likely pay with your freedom. The game is real, and these laws are ferocious. I am writing this from within the "belly of the beast." I am a 26-year-old, biracial woman serving a 14-year sentence for a first-time, nonviolent drug conviction. I am at Federal Prison Camp in Alderson, W. Va., along with my mother. We have just begun our bid. This is not just my story; it is the story of thousands and thousands.

L. Scalia
Alderson, W. Va.

DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER

I was just wondering if Kellye M. Garrett was high when she did that article on Redman and Method Man [Start, "The Mary Jane Boys," January 2002]. What was on her mind? I thought I was going to read about their new movie, but instead I found an article that glorifies and promotes marijuana. Do you not know how many young people read this magazine? I was born and raised in the ghetto, and I can tell you from experience that this is not the type of stuff that my young black brothers and sisters need to read. You owe us a better article and an apology for being so irresponsible.

Von
Menard, Ill.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

As for your "Nursery Rhymes" story [by Vonetta Booker, January 2002], the Lox were the ones who did it before Jay-Z and Busta Rhymes with "We'll Always Love Big Poppa." But y'all failed to indicate that. Next time, try to give props to those who do things first.

Jahwek
Kershaw, S.C.

NOT CONSTRUCTIVE

I'm afraid I'm gonna have to spoil your day and tell you flat out that your reviewer came across as a total amateur in his ignorant review of my latest release, *Off the Record* [Revolutions, by OJ Lima, December 2001]. As an artist, I believe that music, like life, is a never-ending process in which you never stop learning. I always try to get to the next level musically, and so I accept criticism—so long as it's both constructive and positive. Tell me if my beats are out of date or my guitar is out of tune. That way, I'll make sure that what didn't happen on this album will happen on the next. It's all growth to me. He also had the audacity to attack my good friend, the legendary saxophonist Branford Marsalis. Who the hell does he think he is? Quincy Jones?!

Ronny Jordan
via e-mail

CORRECTIONS

- The "I LOVE NY" white cotton tank top on page 38 ("Droppin Dime") of the January 2002 issue wes incorrectly credited to Dolce & Gabbana. The designer is D&G.

WRITE TO VIBE

VIBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIBE MAIL, 215 Lexington Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10016 (include your daytime phone number). Or send e-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (same address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters mey be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returned.

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TAKE IT FROM THE TOP

The first ladies of music are redefining the pimp hat.

From Herrison Ford's daring hero in the *Indiana Jones* flicks to Max Julien's playa king in *Tha Mack*, men have used fedoras to represent en undeniable manliness. But now they've got some fashionable competition. Janet Jackson, Mary J. Blige, and Alicia Keys are emong the urban divas rocking tha stylishly sinister headgear. "You would expect a man to wear them," says Eve, who sports tha pimp look in a brown, gold-chained fedora on her *Scorpion* elbum cover.

Named after the heroine (played by tha legendary Sarah Bernhardt) of tha 1882 French play *Fédora*, tha wide-brims cama to symbolize tha film noir tough guy—think Humphrey Bogart in *The Maltese Falcon*—long before they became part of '70s pimp style. Now, it's the ladies' turn. "Fashion reflects social change, end the fedora, which signels masculinity and power, is a good example," says David B. Givens, director of the Canter for Nonverbal Studies in Spokane, Wash. "Since World War II, sex roles have broken down. Today, woman compete head-to-head with men. So they wear the same power symbols."

With clothing lines, movie roles, and platinum status, J.Lo and company are pimping it just as hard as the boys. "Women who wear fedoras are saying, 'I'm confident and independent, and I want you to notice ma,'" says hat designer Eugenie Klm, who has outfitted Lauryn Hill and Gwen Stefani with fly chapeaus. For Eve, the appeal is simple: "Fedoras just look strong and sexy. They add attitude."

But don't get it twisted; thase girls don't want to be one of the fellas. "Fedoras have a masculine adge, a toughness that makes a woman feel empowered. But to have that power also allows her to feel sexy," says Andrea Lieberman, a stylist who worked with fedora-sporting J.Lo in the "I'm Real" video. It's that chic-and-sleek, heads-down-and-eyes-hidden look that adds an alluring mystique to the mix. "In courtship, if you tilt your face to one side or tip your head down and look up from undar your eyelashes, it sends a seductive message," Givens says. Of course, truly redefining your status from pawn to playa is all about what's under your hat, but looking hot never hurts.

Kulwant Sohol

Illustration by **CARLOS APONTE**

DROPPIN' DIME

VIBE'S TOP 10 LIST



1 **Homies** (*www.homies.tv*). *Vatos locos!* Lil' ▶ Chicano figurines by artist David Gonzales are available at your local grocary-store toy dispensers. Kid Frost–like homie coming soon.

2 **Heertless Bitches Internationel** (*www.heartless-bitches.com*). Specializing in truly heartless and hilarious hateration of men ond women who are shallow, lazy, emotional children, perpetual victims, or just plain losers, this site is not for the weak or whiny. Okay?

3 **The Heroes of Bleck Comedy** (*www.comedycentral.net*). What's the difference between black comedy and black comedians? Check out this five-part series featuring segments on Chris Rock and Richard Pryor to find out.

4 **Björk Remix Web** (*www.orktikos.com/bjork*). Over 900 fan-made remixes of the Icelandic queen's one-of-a-kind vocal landscapes are available on this site.



5 **SportsAccessories.com** ▶ (888-556-7776). Love the way your Rawlings baseball glove feels? Now you can get luggage made out of the same leather. Grass stains not included.

6 **The Bob Marley Netural Mystic Candle** (*www.storfishoils.com*). You smoked to his music, bought his posters, even faked a Jamaican accent. Now, cop the candle licensed by the Marley family to honor the great one.

7 **Rockmond Dunbar 2002-2003 Calender** (*www.rockmonddunbar.com*). You know him as the sensible dad on *Soul Food* and as the hunk next door in the movie *Punks*. But his nude calendar is a whole other experience.

8 **Gucci Made-to-Order** (*www.gucci.com*). Big boys can finally get dipped because Gucci is making custom-made suits. Somebody please tell Fat Joe.

9 **Mini** (*www.mini.com*). Small, quick, and eye-catching, this classic European whip, now available in the U.S., is like Allen Iverson on wheels. ▶



10 **Prada Flegship Store** (212-334-8888). Hi-tech meets high fashion at this block-rockin' Koolhaas-designed spot in SoHo, N.Y.C. A must-see for downtown divas.

DESIGN OF A DECADE

Phat Farm celebrates 10 years in the fashion biz.

Back in 1992, people wondered what Russell Simmons—a man who seemed to live in his shell-toe Adidas, beggy jeans, and T-shirts—could possibly offer the world of fashion. His answer? "Classic American Flava."

It was a hard sell at first. Simmons founded Phat Farm at e time when Cross Colours was floundering; Karl Kani, PNB Nation, and Mecca USA had just hit the market; and mega-designers like Karl Lagerfeld and Isaac Mizrahi were borrowing heevily from hip hop style for their young menswear collections. "Some people considered Phat Farm a joke," says Simmons, 45. "These deys, hip hop hes influenced American culture so much thet my dreem is a reality." So much so that Phat Farm, now celebrating its 10th anniversary, raked in $440 million in reteil sales in 2000, making it one of the top companies in urben sportswear.



SIMMONS POWER: The First Family of Urban Fashion

"For yeers we only shipped to e couple hundred stores. Now it's three thousand," Simmons says. With 13 licensees menufacturing footwear, belts, cosmetics, and watches, plus womenswear heavy hitter Baby Phat, Simmons has certainly built his brand. "Phat Farm hes become en important part of our young men's business," says Kal Ruttenstein, Bloomingdale's fashion director. "It brought a whole new customer into the store."

Pert of the secret of PF's success is that every detail of clothing—from zippers to fabrics—is approved by Simmons or his wife, Kimora Lee Simmons, 25. "My inspiration comes from my life," says Kimora. "I'm not some raunchy guy designing clothes that I want to see your booty in." Of all his businesses, Def Jam included, Simmons stays closest to Phet Ferm. "It's the only plece where I have to drive the ship because there's no replecement for me there," he says. "It's my inspiration; these are my clothes."

But the real secret to Phet Ferm's success is the infusion of Simmons's flava into hip hop basics like denim and T-shirts. "If you see one of our shirts from 1992, it might be dremetically different from whet you see in 2002, but it will still be weareble," says Simmons. "It always keeps the same attitude." Given Phat Farm's popularity and timeless style, the next 10 years should be even better.

Mimi Valdés

SIMMONSES: EVAN AGOSTINI/IMAGE DIRECT


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AALIYAH
THE MOTHER OF ALL VAMPIRES
QUEEN OF THE DAMNED
ALL SHE WANTS IS HELL ON EARTH
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FEBRUARY 22

DVD REVIEWS YOU CAN USE

By Kellye M. Garrett



XZIBIT: *RESTLESS XPOSED* (LOUD)

The Scoop: Music vidaos and live performance clips takan mostly from tha 2000 Up in Smoka and Anger Management tours, plus behind-the-scanaa footaga ahowing tha X-man'a playful sida. **Guest Stars:** Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Eminem, and Mini-Ma. **Flesh Factor:** Dancers get topless for $20 a breast on tha set of one video. **Highlight:** Xzibit does a backstage revue of aarly '90a dances, performad to Color Me Badd'a "I Wanna Sex You Up." **Plot Twist:** A surprisingly low amount of weed amoking.



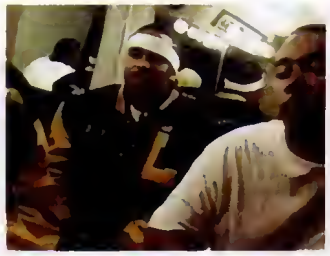
RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS: *OFF THE MAP* (WARNER/REPRISE HOME VIDEO)

The Scoop: If you missed thair last U.S. tour in 2000, all hopa ia not lost, because you'll get tha antire 18-song concart plus backstaga footage. With Mohawka, studded laather, Flea'a tattoos, and Anthony Kiedia'a rapa (hia flow ia much better than Fred Durst's), it's Chili heaven. **Guest Stars:** None. **Flesh Fector:** The band gats topless. **Highlight:** Flea croona a profanity-filled solo. **Plot Twist:** Stretching—not booze—geta tham loose before tha ahow.



RUFF RYDERS: *RUFF RYDERS DOCUMENTARY, VOL. 1* (URBAN WORKS ENTERTAINMENT)

The Scoop: Wanna-ba rap mogula should catch thia *Behind the Music*–esqua retelling of tha Ruff Rydars' rise to glory. **Guest Stars:** Ja Rule and LL Cool J. **Flesh Factor:** A burly, black Santa Claus look-alike almost loses his shirt during e wrestling match. **Highlight:** DMX tella a kid, "Don't do nothing stupid," then drives away sipping a mysterious concoction. **Plot Twist:** DMX'a driving skills aren't *that* bad.



THA ALKAHOLIKS: *X.O. THE MOVIE EXPERIENCE* (FORTRESS ENTERTAINMENT)

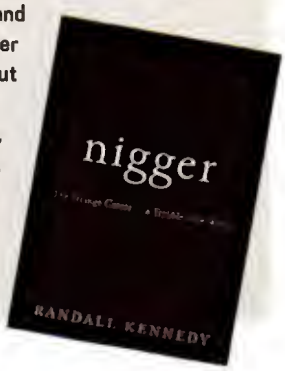
The Scoop: Thia up-close-and-personal ride with Tha Lika is strictly for hard-core fans. **Guest Stars:** Kurupt, Daz Dillingar, and Xzibit. **Flesh Factor:** Enough T&A to rival *Girls Gone Wild*. **Highlight:** They spend five hours posing beside their billboard on the Sunset Strip hoping someone will recognize them. No one does. **Plot Twist:** A tour of J-Ro's hometown of Pacoima, Calif., includas the street where Rodney King got beat down.

XZIBIT: LOUD; PEPPERS: WARNER/REPRISE HOME VIDEO; RUFF RYDERS: URBAN WORKS; ALKAHOLIKS: FORTRESS ENTERTAINMENT; BOOK COVER: PANTHEON; *LUMUMBA*: HBO

V BOOK

Judging by tha flak Jennifer Lopez caught when she told "niggas [to] mind their biz" in the remix of her song "I'm Real," the debate over who can and can't use the N-word is alive and kicking. In his lataat book, *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* (Pantheon), Harverd law professor Randall Kennedy preaents a rigorous critique of the many legal and cultural controversies set off by tha use of that loaded term, tracking its evolution from racial insult to what he calls "a aign of affection being affixed to people of all sorts." Kennedy credits hip hop's independent, if self-centered, attitude for the chenge. "Rappers who use and enjoy the word nigger cere principally about what they themselves think, desire, and enjoy," he says. A provocative read, this *Nigger* will make you think.

V.R. Peterson



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

The critically acclaimed film *Lumumba* gets a national spotlight.

In June 1960, Patrice Lumumba, a former postal worker, was named prime minister of the newly independent African nation of the Congo (now called "Congo"). Nine months later, he was dead. Haitian-born filmmaker Raoul Peck's biopic *Lumumba* opens with the slain leader speaking from the grave as two men crudely dismember and burn his remains.

The film, based closely on actual events, depicts enough black-on-black violence and backstabbing to shock even the most jaded viewer, and shows how Lumumba's dream of a thriving Congo died even before he did. The movie's only drawback is that Peck, who also filmed a Lumumba documentary in 1991, assumes audiences are already familiar with the historic events. But his raw depiction, in French with English subtitles, beats any history book. Just don't expect a happy ending. *Lumumba* airs on HBO starting February 16. *K.M.G.*

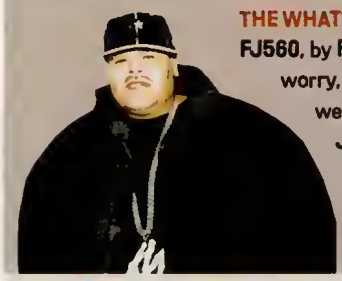


BOSS MAN: Eriq Ebouaney portrays the leader in better days


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FASHIONABLY LOUD

Starting your own clothing line used to be a big deal, but now that everybody and their mama is in the fashion game, VIBE thought it was high time to give props to hip hop's upcoming fashion moguls. Let's have a look at the nominees. *Jon Warech*



THE WHAT'S MY MOTHER-I*@# NAME AWARD

FJ560, by Fat Joe: He began with T-shirts and expanded to sweaters, jeans, leather, and boots. Don't worry, the 560 stands for the address of the original store (560 Melrose in the Bronx), not the weight you have to be to fit into FJ560 clothing.

J. Lo, by Jennifer Lopez: For those with a sand-toward-the-bottom-of-the-hourglass figure, J. Lo's got your back. She's putting it in denim and velour. Unlike her love, J. Lo's clothes *will* cost you.

And the winner is: FJ560. Fat Joe developed his fashion from the streets as a way to bank off his style, not his booty.





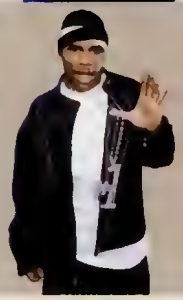
THE LITTLE BIG PANTS AWARD

J. Slick Collection, by MC Hammer: Ironically, Hammer, who epitomized bad '90s fashion, left his colorful genie pants behind and created a line that features high-end suits and accessories.

Dragon Collection, by Sisqo: Flashy and flamboyant, Sisqo is the Hammer of the new millennium. With T-shirts, knits, denim, and leather jackets, the only item this line is missing is the thong-th-thong-thong-thong.

And the winner is: J. Slick. It's probably a godsend for businessmen and NBA rookies who want to project an image that says, "I've arrived." Besides, a little Hammertime never hurt anybody!





THE O.G. AWARD

Vokál, by Nelly: Vokál means "the clothing that speaks for itself," but the only statement you'll be making is, "Hey, I spent more than $25 for a T-shirt that doesn't even say Nelly on it."

Snoop Dogg Collection: This twill, denim, canvas, and leather attire, capped off with bandanna-print detailing, barks up the right tree.

And the winner is: Snoop Dogg Collection. The bandanna look could cause a lot of drama for the SDC come Fashion Week. All Snoop lacks is a dewgy-drawers collection and smoke-away hemp athletic gear.





THE WHOLE WORLD IN HIS HANDS AWARD

Dupri Stylas, by Jarmaine Dupri: Designed straight from J.D.'s closet, the line includes everything from jerseys to linen suits. Luckily, his picture isn't on the clothing.

No Limit Clothing, by Master P: The Colonel's got T-shirts, jerseys, sneakers, and other sportswear, not to mention a women's line and a children's line for Lil' Romeo and the other No Limit soldiers.

And the winner is: No Limit Clothing. On top of a record label, film-production group, toy company, and travel and real estate agencies, P's clothing line is his missing link to ruling the world. He can't ball in the NBA, but at least he can look like he does.





BRING IN DA FUNK, BRING IN DA NOISE AWARD

OutKast Clothing, by OutKast: Simple looks like baggy jeans, linen shirts, and Italian sweaters must mean that André 3000 was out sick the day they picked the designs.

Bushi Designs, by Busta Rhymes: Having rocked Bushi couture at awards shows and in music videos, Busta is his own best customer. He saves the more boring designs, including leather jackets and jeans, for the men on the street.

And the winner is: OutKast. Call these ATLiens the Versace of the ghetto. The 'hood is always willing to cough up top dollar to look so fresh and so clean.



FAT JOE: JOHNNY NUÑEZ; LOPEZ: JLO BY JENNIFER LOPEZ; HAMMER: CLIFTON PHOTOGRAPHY; SISQO: TAMMIE ARROYO/AFF/RETNA; NELLY: FRANK MICELOTTA/IMAGE DIRECT; SNOOP DOGG: WILLIAM RICHARDS; DUPRI: JOHN RICARD/RETNA; MASTER P: TIM ALEXANDER; BIG BOI: OUTKAST CLOTHING; RHYMES: BUSHI DESIGNS

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BOBBITO plays the tracks. VERONICA WEBB states the facts.

For tha past seven yeare, Veronica Webb's work on LIFEbeat's board of diractors has helped raisa millions of dollars for AIDS research. Recently, she has won $250,000 for LIFEbeat on *Who Wonts to Be a Millionoira*, testifiad before Congress on behelf of the organization, and worked on the preparations for thair UrbanAID concert in April. Veronica is motivated by the alarming statistics: 64 percent of women who contract HIV in the U.S. are African-American, and black and Latino females aged 15 to 25 are most at risk. Outsida of LIFEbeat, Varonica, 37, has written a book, *Veronica Webb Sight: Adventures in tha Big City*, and appaared in films like *Zoolonder*. Oh yeah, she'e also a suparmodal who has worked for Victoria's Secret, Revlon, and Chanel.



De La Soul—"Watch Out" (2001) vs. Cal Tjader—"Cubano Chant" (1958)

VW: De La's always smart and fresh. I don't know tha second ona. Thay both faal like grand traditions of New York music.

B: This is Cal Tjader. He's tha guy that De La sampled.

VW: I thought it was smart for them to use vibes instead of a drum machina. I haven't really heard that before. Have you?

B: Around 1990, Peta Rock and Large Professor started sampling jazz, and vibas were a big part of that.

Masters at Work, featuring Patti Austin—"Like a Butterfly (You Send Me)" (2001) vs. Quincy Jones, featuring Patti Austin—"Razzamatazz" (1981)

VW: The first record is that light, uptampo-R&B-halfway-disco '70s stuff that makes ma anxious.

B: Anxious to danca, or anxious bacausa you want more?

VW: I'm expecting more, and I'm anxious for it to be over.

B: That wes a house record that came out last year featuring Patti Austin. It's Mastars at Work.

VW: For me, the two don't fit together. But who can turn down "Razzamatazz"? Wa all remember that from the good old days when people dressed in three-piece polyester suits and knick-knicks and went to parties.

B: Knick-knicks?

VW: Those polyester shirts with the scanic prints on tham.

B: Oh yeah.

4hero—"Les Fleur" (2001) vs. Ramsey Lewis—"Les Fleur" (1968)

VW: The first ona reminds ma of somathing from *Jesus Christ Superstar*. It has '70s storytelling—very extandad, slightly folksy rock 'n' roll. The second ona reminds ma of tha stuff Nally Furtado and Natalia Imbruglia are doing.

B: It's Ramsey Lewis.

VW: Tha big Ramsey Lewis record is *Sun Goddess*. A lot of peopla had that album cover in their rooms. I responded to that ona more because tha musicianship was better.

B: Whan you listen to music, do you put it in a context like that?

VW: I was putting old records into groups the other day—After 5 p.m. and Before Noon. I had Faith and Biggie in After 5 p.m., and k.d. lang, Everything but the Girl, and Minnie Riperton in Before Noon. If you put a good record on at the wrong tima, it'll ruin tha mood.



PEEK-A-BOO: Bobbito and the one and only V. Webb

Photograph by ERIC McNATT


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TO GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE WE GO.
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ALL THE WAY LIVE

Want to get noticed? Learn how to freak your performance. **By Carla Lynne Hall**

Let's face it: Anyone can throw down in the studio, where producers and gadgets smooth out the rough edges. But the true measure of an artist is the live show. It's where all the elements come together: your vision, your sound, your style and energy. "A great live performer is someone who really grips an audience and then lifts them to a more intense emotional space," says Clive Davis, chairman and CEO of J Records. "It could be a powerful voice that stirs the soul, or it could be a killer talent, whether in musicianship or dance or pure charisma—these are the true elements that make a star." The more you give, the more you're likely to get back from the audience. Try some of these tips on for size:

JUMP ON IT. Find every opportunity to perform. "It doesn't matter what city you live in," says Kelly Rowland of Destiny's Child. "There is somebody important there looking for new talent. You never know what can happen."

REHEARSE. Performing in front of the mirror at home will help you separate your smooth moves from your goofy ones. Tape your practices and gigs, and study them. "I do a month of rehearsals about four to six weeks before going on tour," says Mary J. Blige.

ADVERTISE. Want to look out from the stage and see a sea of folks throwing their hands in the air? Call and e-mail everyone you know. Tell your mom to bring her friends. The more applause you get, the better you'll feel.

HAVE A *LOOK*. Never underestimate the power of looking good. Whether you spend a lot of money or not, it pays to put some thought into the persona you project. "Establish a really different image and style," says Rowland. "There's nothing like seeing something refreshing."

DON'T BE BORING. When you hit the stage, rock out, jump around, pump your fist—give them drama! No one wants to watch a performer pace back and forth across the stage. "You gotta be creative," says Rahzel, the Godfather of Noyze. "You gotta do what no one else is doing."

CALM DOWN. Butterflies are normal. Keep going. "I've done tons of shows, and I still get a tickle in my stomach before I go onstage," says Blige. "Sometimes people see the crowd out there and get scared. You can't be affected by stage fright, or it's not going to work out."

DO A COVER. Show off your style by freaking a song everybody knows. "You gotta play what people want to hear," says Rahzel. "You can throw in your elements, but it's like being at the Apollo. If you come out with a Patti LaBelle song, everybody's loving you."

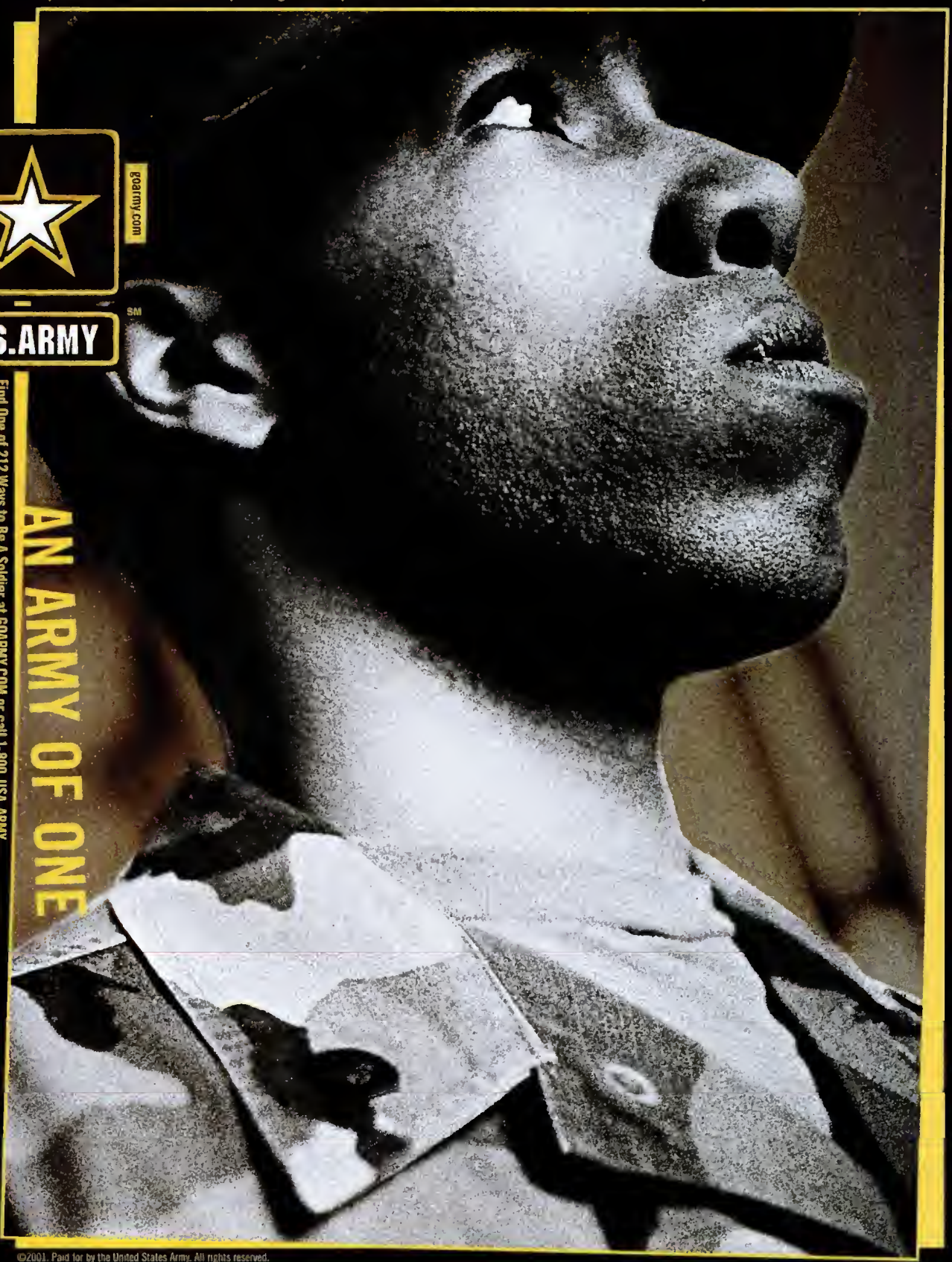
CONNECT. Silence is deadly. Think about what you might say to bridge gaps between songs. Keep it simple, and pay attention to how you say things. "I like to tell the audience a story that leads into a song," says Blige.

DON'T HOLD BACK. Get up there and move the crowd. "Think about what you're going to do for the audience as far as entertaining them," says Rowland. "Make them smile, make them sing, and bring out emotions—sometimes they're emotions that they've never felt before."

Next month: The real deal about copyrights.

Illustration by **SAIMAN CHOW**

Specialist. **Oscar Domino.** Operating Room Specialist. **AN ARMY OF ONE.**℠ In the United States Army.



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FASHION FIRST

BEVERLY JOHNSON as told to Billy Johnson Jr.

When supermodel Beverly Johnson became the first African-American to appear on the cover of Vogue *in 1974, she broke through one of the toughest barriers in the fashion industry. That milestone led her to more than 500 other magazine covers and, eventually, to a successful career as an entrepreneur and executive with her own line of beauty products and eyewear. Johnson, 50, who's also a pro golfer and mother to 22-year-old daughter Anansa, lives in Bel Air, Calif., where she shared her memories—both proud and bittersweet—of her experiences as a famous first.*



STILL GOT IT: Johnson looking superfly at 50

MARC BAPTISTE

Being the first African-American on the cover of *Vogue* was like being Rosa Parks or Jackie Robinson. It was the first time in American history that a black face, that black skin, was accepted as beautiful by the high-fashion world. Now, believe me, I was just a vehicle. It could have been anyone.

But as gratifying as that was, and after all the publicity I got, from *The New York Times* to *Newsweek*, I faced a lot of resistance from the modeling agencies and my peers, and that angered me. That historical cover made me one of the biggest models in the world, black or white. But it ruffled a lot of feathers.

So I know what Naomi Campbell and Tyra Banks have gone through. I know all the big cosmetics deals that they haven't gotten. I know they should be worth more than they are. For me, though, it's not a matter of being bitter; it's a matter of being realistic and figuring out how you want to make your money.

I made my modeling career a business. I marketed myself, and kept out of many things that wouldn't have been as prestigious in order to increase my value. There came a time when I refused to do any more liquor and cigarette ads. That meant missing out on a lot of money, because the only way we really made money in advertising was to sell liquor and cigarettes. I also turned down millions of dollars when I wouldn't go to South Africa due to apartheid.

As I think back, I really calculated, and made strategic, purposeful moves. I realize that for some odd reason God chose me. I don't know why, but I got to step up. And that's what I did.

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THE UNVEILING: Afghan women are on the freedom trail

WOMAN HOOD

The women of Afghanistan have lived under one of the cruelest regimes in history. **dream hampton** wonders what American women might learn from their struggle.

My summer wardrobe staple last year was a pair of white Gucci hot pants. So I cannot fathom what it was like to live under a regime like the Taliban. They stoned, hanged, and lashed women for offenses ranging from prostitution to exposing an elbow in public. But I, too, like my veiled sisters, have always lived in a nation that says a woman's life is worth less than a man's—although not in language as coercive as the Taliban's.

In 2000, women in Afghanistan committed suicide by self-immolation to protest the Taliban's brutality. The torching of bras, a symbol of resistance to sexist oppression employed by my mother's generation, seems an empty gesture in comparison. Meanwhile, my generation's contradictory postfeminist messages of sexual empowerment and liberation don't come close to the clarity of the statement women in Afghanistan were sending to their oppressors: freedom or death.

I am no patriot. I think America's global policy is guided by paternalism. And though we may choose to wear hot pants in America, we are hardly free. An American woman suffers domestic abuse every 15 seconds; we make 76 cents to every dollar a man earns, and are more likely to live in poverty than a man. One in four of us is molested by age 18, and one of every six of us will be raped in our lifetime.

When the war in Afghanistan began, American media became obsessed with the constrictive *burka*, and brought attention to the public lashings, wife beatings, honor killings (murder by male relatives for a perceived infidelity), and routine rapes—but they never drew parallels between the suffering of women in Afghanistan and the truth of women's lives in America. It is this kind of cultural imperialism (the idea that what Muslim women really want and need is a bikini) that is responsible for much of the international resentment directed at Americans.

A world revolution that will end the global oppression of women can only come *from* women. There is no guarantee that a U.S.-backed government will abolish the human-rights abuses against women in Afghanistan. In order for the U.S. to make those kinds of demands on another country without being hypocritical, we would first have to deal with our own statistics. And for America to do that, American women would have to frame their oppression as such. The problem here is that no matter how many women's advocacy groups plaster billboards with the dismal numbers of human-rights violations perpetrated against women in America, too many of us believe we are truly free. As if we knew what that felt like.

LAURA RAUCH/AP

EVERYTHING THE HOTTEST DESIGNERS CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Compiled by Kulwant Sohal

TOMMY HILFIGER,



all-American designer, has stores opening in four South American cities

■ **Favorite fashion designer:** Yves Saint Laurent. From his House of Dior work in the '50s to his own designs of the late '70s that invoked the rich fantasy-peasant look, his collections reflect a social understanding of the times.

■ **Favorite novel:** *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger. There's a little bit of Holden Caufield in all of us, especially New Yorkers. He's confused at times, but still lovable.

■ **Favorite movie:** *North by Northwest*. It's a fast-paced Hitchcock thriller. Cary Grant knows how to deliver Hitchcock suspense. He went through so much during that film and never stopped being Cary Grant. That's a real star for you.



◀ **Favorite musicians:** The Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, and the Doors. I grew up listening to the great music of the '60s, and I still love classic rock.

ANNA SUI,



queen of rock 'n' roll chic, flashes back to an early 1900s prairie look for her spring line

■ **Fashion necessity:** A really cool coat. It's the best investment. It makes a statement, especially during the winter, because wherever you go, that's the only thing people get to see.



■ **Favorite album:** *Blonde on Blonde*, by Bob Dylan. It takes me back to a more innocent time when there was a new awareness of youth culture. Everything just seemed possible at that point. I really like that level of energy.

◀ **Favorite gadget:** Electric toothbrush. It's the only thing I really always use. I'm not so gadgety.

■ **Favorite car:** Rolls-Royce. I can't drive, but if I could have any car it would be a psychedelic Rolls like John Lennon had back in the '60s. He painted it like a gypsy caravan. I thought that was the coolest thing. I would take it for a cross-country drive in Europe.

LANDO FELIX,



cofounder and head of creative design at Enyce, is designing dog kennels for producer Swizz Beatz's canines

■ **Fashion necessity:** Shoes. It's essential that I buy footwear wherever I am. I collect the designer versions of sneakers. The Takeo Kikuchi New Balence from Tokyo are the hottest sneakers I've ever owned.



■ **Favorite movie:** *Friday*. It's just the funniest movie. I've seen it 50 times. I recite the dialogue and still laugh. I don't think I learned much, though.

■ **Favorite album:** *Sign O' the Times*, by Prince. I could drop the needle on any side and let the record play through. When I was growing up, he was my favorite artist. His new albums are all routine, but it's still amazing to watch him perform live.

◀ **Favorite perfume:** Kenzo Pour Homme. It's light but not flowery and girlish. The bottle is unique. It's barely translucent and shaped like a piece of bamboo.

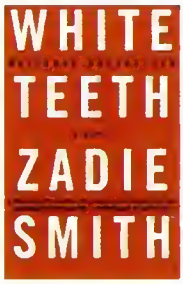
SANDY DALAL,



known for his funky but classic menswear, was, at 21, the youngest person ever to win a Council of Fashion Designers Award (in 1998)

■ **Favorite fashion moment:** Being completely underdressed at formal events. I've walked into fashion events wearing sandals when everyone else was in a tuxedo. I have a side to me that's still young and idiotic.

■ **Favorite director:** Mejid Mejidi. He's from Iran and did the films *Children of Heaven* and *The Color of Paradise*. He's an incredible storyteller. His films deal with issues like handicapped people and poverty seen through the eyes of children.



◀ **Favorite novel:** *White Teeth*, by Zadie Smith. She is a poignant writer. Everything is so detailed, but it never sounds like too much. I wish I could express myself like that.

■ **Favorite car:** Toyota Land Cruiser. I have a 1980s model. It's huge, square, and chunky. It's just a workhorse for transporting stuff.

HILFIGER: TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS; THE ROLLING STONES: PAUL NATKIN/IMAGE DIRECT; TOOTHBRUSH: SONICARE/PHILLIPS; KENZO POR HOMME: KENZO; DALAL: ARNALDO ANAYA-LUCCA; *WHITE TEETH*: KNOPF


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WHERE MY GIRLS AT?

INDIA.ARIE, MYSTIC, KELIS, RES, LINA, AND MC LYTE, House of Blues, Hollywood, November 29, 2001

Hollywood'e House of Blues is nowhere near pecked et 9 p.m., when DJ Jezzy Joyce hits the stage to jump-start the finel data of the *MTV2* ond *VIBE Present Sisters for Hip-Hop & Soul* tour. She opens with old-school hits, setting the stage for MC Lyte, whose 15-minute set—highlighted by her classic "Cha Cha Cha" and a new joint, "It's On"—surprisingly doesn't hype tha crowd. Lina, up next, can't quite capture the eudience either with her Billia Holiday–esque swing-jazz vibe.

But by 10 p.m., tha house is full, and the enargy starts to build. Res, backed by e full band, charges onto the stage and rips a 25-minute rock set that gets people warmed up. Then Kelis really livens up the party with her latest cut, "Young, Fresh, n' New." She takee it to the next level, commanding the stage with her presence end going convincingly psycho on her hit "Caught Out There."

Sporting Adidas, a pink B-girl dress, and a white Kangol, Mystic steps onstaga next and keeps concertgoers spellbound with e demonstration of her formidable singing and emceeing skills. Sade's homegirl Indie.Arie takes it from there, playing her ecoustic guitar for tha majority of her hour-long set, infusing excerpts of songs by Terence Trent D'Arby, Mary J. Blige, end Bobby Caldwell into her flow. She even persuades the melenin-deficient to sing "Brown Skin" with prida.

At 1:40 a.m., India end ell her girls close the show with a reprise of Mystic's "Girlfriend Sistagirl," the unspoken theme of the tour: "Girlfriand Sistagirl / You ara tha mothar of the world / They'll break you down / Meke you cry / But you were born to eing / And mede to fly." Repping the worlds of R&B, deejaying, rock, and hip hop, these ladies definitely exemplified that sentiment. *Billy Johnson*







WORKING WOMEN: (Clockwise from top left) India.Arie, Mystic, and Kelis

Photographs by **AMY GRAVES/GLOBE PHOTOS**

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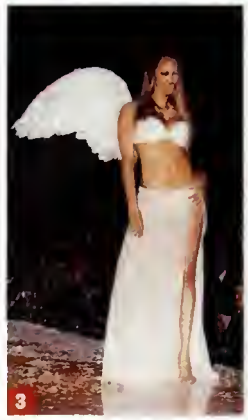
FLASHIN' FASHION

1. Heve the mad scientists already cloned **USHER?** No, it's just little brother **JAMES** who rolled with him to Russell Simmons's book releese party for *Life* ond *Def; Sex, Drugs, Money + God* at The Park in New York City. **2.** Over here, **ROSARIO!** The paparazzi couldn't get enough of **MS. DAWSON** at the premiere of *Sidewolks of New York*. **3.** Could it be thet **TYRA BANKS** was puckering up for new boyfriend Chris Webber at the Victoria's Secret fashion show? **4.** Should **MOS DEF** and **BILL BELLAMY** arm wrestle to see who'll be starring in more movies this year? **5.** **GHOSTFACE KILLAH** turned heeds at The Perk sporting a look thet said bed, bath, *and* beyond. **6.** **LADY SAW,** backin' that thang up at the VP Records *Strictly the Best 27* and *28* record release party in N.Y.C. **7.** **DONNA KARAN** and **IMAN** flash their pearly whites at the release party for the book *I Am Imon*. **8.** While the models at the Victoria's Secret fashion show were freezing, **MARY J. BLIGE** was snug end toasty after her performance. **9.** Supermodel **ALEK WEK** made a low-key baseball tee look high feshion et the An American View show. **10.** These guys never stress about getting dressed in the morning. Fubu's **DAYMOND JOHN** and **RUSSELL SIMMONS** rockin' their own threads at The Park. **11.** At the Nintendo Game Cube launch party, **LIL' KIM** bore a striking resemblance to the Elmo on her jacket.

Cormen Renee Thompson


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1, 4, 8, 10: JOHNNY NUÑEZ; 2: EDWARD HAWTHORNE; 3, 9: CAROLINE TOREM-CRAIG; 6: AJAMU; 7: PATRICK MCMULLAN; 8, 11: MATT BARON/BEI

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the outsider

lime doesn't...fit in. and that's just the way he likes it. class photo? last row. 3rd from left. that's lime.

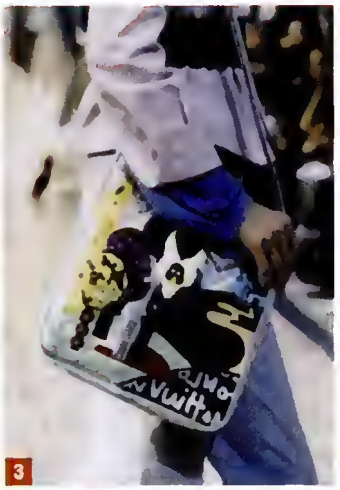
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EXTRA! EXTRA!

What are all the fashion headlines saying? Accessorize! This spring, designers have a keen eye for details—from classic hats and flashy jewelry to embroidered bags and sneakers. Spice up your look with these must-have accoutrements straight from the runways. *Tosho Turner*

1. Gold "Dolce & Gabbana" earrings by **Dolce & Gabbana.** 2. White shoulder bag by **Kenneth Cole New York.** 3. Patchwork bag by **Louis Vuitton.** 4. Blue sunglasses by **Emporio Armani.** 5. White, burgundy, and black leather Prajna low-cut sneakers by **Yohji Yamamoto.** 6. White fedora by **Fendi.** 7. Black and burgundy street chic boots by **Christian Dior.** 8. White light cotton satin holster by **Helmut Lang.** SEE THE DETAILS

RUNWAY: (TOP ROW, FROM LEFT) COURTESY OF DOLCE & GABBANA; COURTESY OF KENNETH COLE NEW YORK; COURTESY OF LOUIS VUITTON; COURTESY OF EMPORIO ARMANI. (BOTTOM ROW) COURTESY OF YOHJI YAMAMOTO; COURTESY OF FENDI; COURTESY OF CHRISTIAN DIOR; COURTESY OF HELMUT LANG

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THE FUBU EXPERIENCE

First the clothing line, then the record label, and now we finally get a "scents" of what Fubu really is. Their latest project, **Plush: The Fragrance,** offers lines for men and women featuring sleek bottles of everything from parfum for $48 to body wash and shower gel for $18 each. Plush's clean, fresh smell could become a signature scent for you and your boo. Available at select department stores nationwide.

BLAZIN'

Johnny Blaze, the clothing line, and Method Man, the guy with many aliases, have finally joined forces. The rapper and movie star otherwise known as Johnny Blaze will be featured in upcoming clothing ads. He'll also lend his talent and clout to designing and positioning the company, so there's no telling how high the two will go. For more information, go to *www.johnnyblazeny.com.*

A PERFECT MATCH

Who do Jennifer Lopez, Ananda Lewis, and Sarah Jessica Parker turn to when they're looking for the perfect shade of pink? **Three Custom Color Specialists,** that's who. Trae Bodge, Scott Catto, and Chad Hayduk offer custom-color-blending services for lips, eyes, brows, and cheeks. What's better than having makeup custom-made just for you? Nothing! For more information, go to *www.threecustom.com.*

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GAME BOY

A self-professed video-game junkie, fashion designer Marc Ecko critiques three new titles. **By Alex Porter**



MISSION CONTROL: Fashion isn't all Ecko knows







In designer Marc Ecko's world, fashion, music, sports, and video games are all healthy segments of urban culture. He has the clothing game sewed up with his hot spring collection, and now he has worked his aesthetic into the digital realm with EA Sports' Madden 2002 (Xbox, GameCube, PS2). It lets you unlock Team Ecko, a powerhouse squad that outfits Marc, Xzibit, and Prodigy, among others, in unique uniforms designed by guess who. We asked Ecko, an avid gamer himself, to test three new titles, one for each major console.

1. *Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader* (GameCube–LucasArts)
This game is well done. The graphics are really beautiful. It's the closest thing to the movie so far, and it has all your favorite things about *Star Wars* without overstating them. I love the R2-D2 noises. But it's not as sophisticated as some of the other *Star Wars* games that have lots of buttons and finger movements; for example, you can't lock on targets as easily in this version. This is not really my thing, but if I was high, it'd be good.

2. *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee* (Xbox–Microsoft)
This is fresh. I've played the old, side-scrolling versions of this. Look at these 'shroom things he's gotta collect. They're called "Spooces"—sounds like "spunk," some manly, seminal fluid or something. It's ill that you can totally look around and change the view. For an Xbox launch title, though, they could have come stronger. If you're gonna build an 18-plex theater, don't put crappy movies in it. The character design is great, and the game is solid. But it's more for a hard-core gaming nerd.

3. *James Bond 007 in Agent Under Fire* (PS2–EA)
What I love about PlayStation is that they give you tips on how to use the controller. But this should be all about chicks and cleavage. And the plot is linear. That's the kind of thing I'm frustrated with in gaming. This is really a graphically souped-up version of the old Bond shooters. You're forced to complete certain preset objectives, as opposed to having a sense of discovery. They should have the girls take their shirts off. Where's the take-your-shirt-off button?

Photograph by **EMILY WILSON**


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WHO DID WHAT WHERE & WHEN

ANNOUNCING



HARD TIME: Forté is behind bars now

• On November 20, a U.S. district court judge in Houston sentenced rapper **John Forté** to 14 years in a federal penitentiary for drug trafficking. Forté, 26, is best known for his work on the Fugees' 1996 album, *The Score*. He was arrested in July 2000 after federal agents discovered, via phone tap, that he would be picking up a package of "ice cream," or cocaine, at Newark International Airport. Agents busted Forté after two female couriers handed him a suitcase containing 31 pounds of cocaine. Forté maintains that he thought he was picking up money for a friend. Singer and family friend Carly Simon posted bail, and her husband, James Hart, testified as a character witness on Forté's behalf, but the jury didn't buy it.

• **Mumia Abu-Jamal**, 47, the former journalist and Black Panther who was sentenced to death for the 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner, has received at least a temporary reprieve. On December 18, U.S. District Judge William Yohn ordered the state of Pennsylvania to conduct a new sentencing hearing within 180 days or his sentence will be automatically commuted to life in prison. The court upheld Abu-Jamal's first-degree murder conviction, turning down his request for a retrial. Philadelphia prosecutors have appealed the sentencing ruling.



ON HOLD: Mumia Abu-Jamal gets a chance at life

LAWSUITS

• **Eminem** might have to face his old school-yard nemesis again. On December 6, DeAngelo Bailey, whom Eminem portrayed as a fat bully on "Brain Damage," from 1999's *The Slim Shady LP*, filed a $1 million lawsuit in Michigan alleging the song damaged his reputation, caused him humiliation, and prevented his own rap career from taking off. In his suit, Bailey, now a janitor, claims Eminem made up the stories to gain credibility in the music industry, where he "faced criticism that he had not suffered through difficult circumstances growing up."

• **Aretha Franklin**, 59, recently filed a $50 million defamation lawsuit in a Michigan court against *Star* magazine, which published an article in December 2000 headlined "Aretha Franklin Drinking Herself Into a Grave." Franklin's lawyers deny alcohol abuse and contend that the story damaged her by "raising questions in the minds of many venues as to whether she was reliable or not." American Media Inc., the publisher of *Star*, didn't comment on the lawsuit. At press time, there was no word on when the case would go to trial.



THE QUEEN: Singing a song about lies

DEATHS

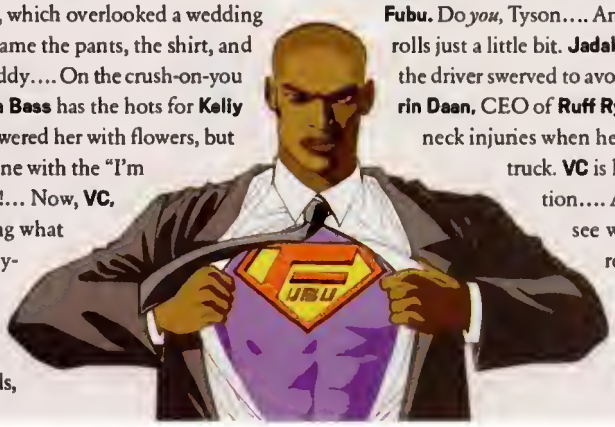
• **Rufus Thomas**, a singer and trailblazer on the Memphis music scene, died December 8 in Memphis at the age of 84. Thomas, who was one of the first black radio personalities in the South back in the 1940s, scored a number of chart hits during his career, including "Do the Funky Chicken," "Walking the Dog," and "Do the Funky Penguin" for Memphis's famed Stax Records.

Reporting by David Crowley

VIBE CONFIDENTIAL

THE LOWDOWN ON THE DOWN LOW

Dear readers, what time is it? Time to get ill, apparently. Folks are just getting into so much drama, **VC** is wondering if their mamas know! **VC** heard through the grapevine that **Puffy** performed a striptease from his Miami hotel room's balcony, which overlooked a wedding party below. Off came the shoes, off came the pants, the shirt, and finally, P. Daddy let everyone see lil' Diddy.... On the crush-on-you tip, **VC** found out that **'N Sync's Lance Bass** has the hots for **Kelly Rowland** from **Destiny's Child.** He showered her with flowers, but she dodged the blue-green-eyed baritone with the "I'm already seeing someone" move. Ouch!... Now, **VC,** like everyone else, has been wondering what in the world ever happened to honey-voiced '80s diva **Anita Baker.** We heard her return to recording was halted recently by the losses of her mother and aunt, and now her label, Atlantic Records, has dropped her. But **VC** thinks she's not pressed, since she reportedly owns all her songs.... On the free-agent tip, **VC** has heard that model **Tyson Beckford** has said so long to **Ralph Lauren** and may be pumping those pecs for **Fubu.** Do *you*, Tyson.... And finally, it seems folks need to slow their rolls just a little bit. **Jadakiss's** tour bus flipped over in Ohio after the driver swerved to avoid a deer. No one was seriously hurt. **Darrin Dean,** CEO of **Ruff Ryders,** wasn't so lucky, suffering head and neck injuries when he crashed his three-wheeler into a parked truck. **VC** is happy to report that he's in stable condition.... Anyhoo, it's time for us to run along and see who's blowing up the hot lines. So just remember, this is all off the record, strictly on the QT, and you didn't hear it here.



SUPERMODEL: Tyson may be Fubu's secret weapon

Illustration by **SHAWN MARTINBROUGH**

FORTÉ: ANTHONY CUTAJAR/LONDON FEATURES; ABU-JAMAL: MUMIA2000.ORG; FRANKLIN: JOHN SPELLMAN/RETNA


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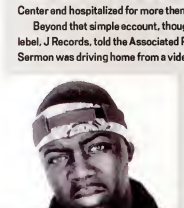
HARD KNOCK NEWS

MYSTERY MAN

Erick Sermon's controversial accident.

This much hes been esteblished: On September 25, police officers in Paterson, N.J., responded to an emergency call saying that a man had fallen from the third floor of an apartment building. When they arrived on the scene at 1:40 a.m., they found Erick Sermon, 33, lying on his back in the parking lot, being treated by paramedics for a bleeding head wound. According to a police report, a female witness told officers that the rapper (whose single "Music" hit No. 1 in 2001) was visiting her apartment, and that she had stepped out for e minute. When she returned, she said, the window was open, and he was lying on his back, three stories below. Sermon was taken to St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center and hospitalized for more then e week.

Beyond that simple account, though, little is clear. Sermon's lebel, J Records, told the Associated Press on November 27 that Sermon was driving home from a video shoot when his car skidded on a rain-drenched road and crashed into a wall. J Records has since refused to explein why they gave this account. The Paterson Police Dept. incident report from that night said they had responded to "a report of an attempted suicide," and the media, including VIBE, published that story.



HE SAYS: Sermon denies he attempted suicide

Sermon unequivocally denies that he jumped out the window or made any suicide attempt—but doesn't offer an explanation as to how he ended up in the parking lot. Instead, he offers a completely different account. "I fell," he says. "I was on the phone and just tripped down a couple flights [of stairs]."

Lt. Phillip Perrone, an officer at the scene on September 25 (since retired), doesn't see it the same way. "He went out that window, no question," Perrone says. William McElrath, captain at the responding precinct, says the police made no determination about whether the event was accidental. "All the reports from the initial investigation indicate that it was a potential suicide," says McElrath. "The report says the doctor relayed to officers that Sermon jumped out the window because he wented to die."

Since the police found no evidence of e criminel act, they are no longer investigating the case. And Sermon is sticking by his story. "If I jumped from a window," he says, "there would have been e crime scene with pictures. There was none of that."

David Crowley

20QUESTIONS







Ray J, De La Soul, and Rachel Dratch

1. Shouldn't **John Walker,** the American Taliban and former hip hop fan, be sentenced to listen to **Vanilla Ice** records for the next 20 years? **2.** Why does everyone think having **Fabolous** appear on their songs will help their record sales when his own album has only gone gold so far? **3.** Doesn't **Christina Milian** sound like a watered-down **Mya? 4.** Wouldn't it be funny if **'N Sync's** song "Gone" were about the fading popularity of the **Backstreet Boys? 5.** Why do so many singers—Michael Jackson, India.Arie, Mariah Carey, and Alicia Keys—love **butterflies? 6.** Now that they're with Tha Row Records, aren't **Ray J** and **Left Eye** a little afraid of being hung off a hotel-room balcony by their ankles if they don't go platinum? **7.** Are **ultra-pointy-toed boots** the new reason for having ugly feet? **8.** Wouldn't it have been cool if **Jay-Z** had gotten **Mötley Crüe** to record "Girls, Girls, Girls" with him? **9.** How come everyone is still sleeping on **De La Soul? 10.** Doesn't *SNL*'s **Rachel Dratch** look exactly like **Harry Potter? 11.** Who do you think would win an acoustic-guitar battle between **India.Arie, Jewel, Lauryn Hill,** and Missy's new protégée **Tweet? 12.** Or should they all just join forces and start a **mariachi band** called the Four Amigas? **13.** And speaking of **Tweet,** wouldn't it have sounded better if **Missy** had stepped aside and let her sing lead on the ballad "Take Away"? **14.** Isn't **Pink** starting to look like **Eve? 15.** And doesn't **Pink's** song "Get the Party Started" sound like the jingle for a **Pringles commercial? 16.** How did **Creed's** ego get so big that the band is comparing itself to **Led Zeppelin? 17.** Whatever heppened to **Fiona Apple? 18.** Doesn't it look like **Raekwon** is picking his nose on the back of **Ghostface's** *Bulletproof Wallets*? **19.** Do you think **Wu-Tang Clan, G.Dep,** and **Lil' Kim** feel stupid for sweating **Zab Judah** in their rhymes only to see him get knocked out by **Kostya Tszyu** in the second round? **20.** Shouldn't **marijuana** just be given a starring role as itself in a movie?

SLANGUISTICS

IT'S A WRAP: to be finishad. This phrase, which film directors use to signal the end of a shoot, is frequently utilized to dismiss people. G. Dep dropped it on his song "Special Delivery," from *Child of the Ghetto*: "Change your name to Saran 'cause it's a wrap." In the song "Fiend," from the Violator V2.0 compilation, JoJo Pellegrino lets folks know that he doesn't take long in the studio: "Punch lines accumulate; the engineers cue DATS / I hit the vocal booths / and it's a wrap."

SERMON: JONATHAN MANNION; RAY J, ANTHONY DEVIA/LONDON FEATURES; DRATCH: ANTHONY DEVIA/LONDON FEATURES

PlayStation.2

A New Legacy Is Born. In the hero community you have two types: Those that fight evil and those that happen to be around while others are doing the fighting. Introducing Jak (the fighter) and Daxter (umm, the other guy). Join them as they voyage to defy the forces of evil on an adventure many dream about...but few dare attempt. To find out more about their legendary quest, check out www.jakanddaxter.com



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FROM HARLEM TO ROCKEFELLER CENTER, VIBE KNOWS HOW TO SPREAD HOLIDAY CHEER!

Ashley Stewart and VIBE celebrated Ashley Stewart's anniversary with a holiday party in Harlem! Hundreds of preferred customers stopped by Ashley Stewart on 125th Street for an in-store event hosted by KISS-FM on-air personality Shaila, with DJ Kaori on the ones and twos. l-r: Hovig Garabedian, marketing director, Ashley Stewart; Beverly Smith, fashion and beauty advertising director; Shaila, on-air personality, KISS-FM; DJ Kaori; and Ali Muhammad, associate director, marketing & artist relations. Ali Muhammad, Shaila, and Hovig Garabedian surrounded by our great Harlem women of style.

Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, Sean John Boys, and VIBE spread some holiday cheer with their families. Celebrity families joined us at the Rockefeller Center ice skating rink for some holiday fun! Guests enjoyed special performances by the Boys Choir of Harlem and Bad Boy recording artist Dream. Emil Wilbekin, editor-in-chief, Combs, and supermodel Naomi Campbell present a donation to Brotherhood, Sister Sol on behalf of Sean John Boys clothing line. Combs surrounded by the children of Brotherhood, Sister Sol.

Féria Multi-Faceted Shimmering Haircolor by L'Oréal Paris and VIBE presented the "Name Your Color, Name Your Color" Contest. Contestants had a chance to name Féria's hottest new colors and receive great gifts. Tawanda Allen, our grand-prize winner received a one-year supply of Féria hair color, a Destiny's Child music package (including their latest CD, *8 Days of Christmas*; *Survivor*; the *Carmen* soundtrack; and home videos courtesy of Columbia Records) and VIBE stuff... because she's worth it! VIBE readers had a chance to submit a picture of themselves and the R&B, or rap star they "doubled" for in the "Double Up" contest sponsored by Doublemint®. Who does our winner double for? You guessed it–Nelly! Deshawn Devante will get the ultimate Nelly music package, and cool VIBE stuff. Congratulations! Keep reading VIBE for more fun contests and sweepstakes.

PHOTOS–Johnny Nunez (1-2) courtesy of DMI (3-4) courtesy of Tawanda Allen (5) courtesy of Deshawn Devante (6) Anthony Mandler shot Nelly for the VIBE cover



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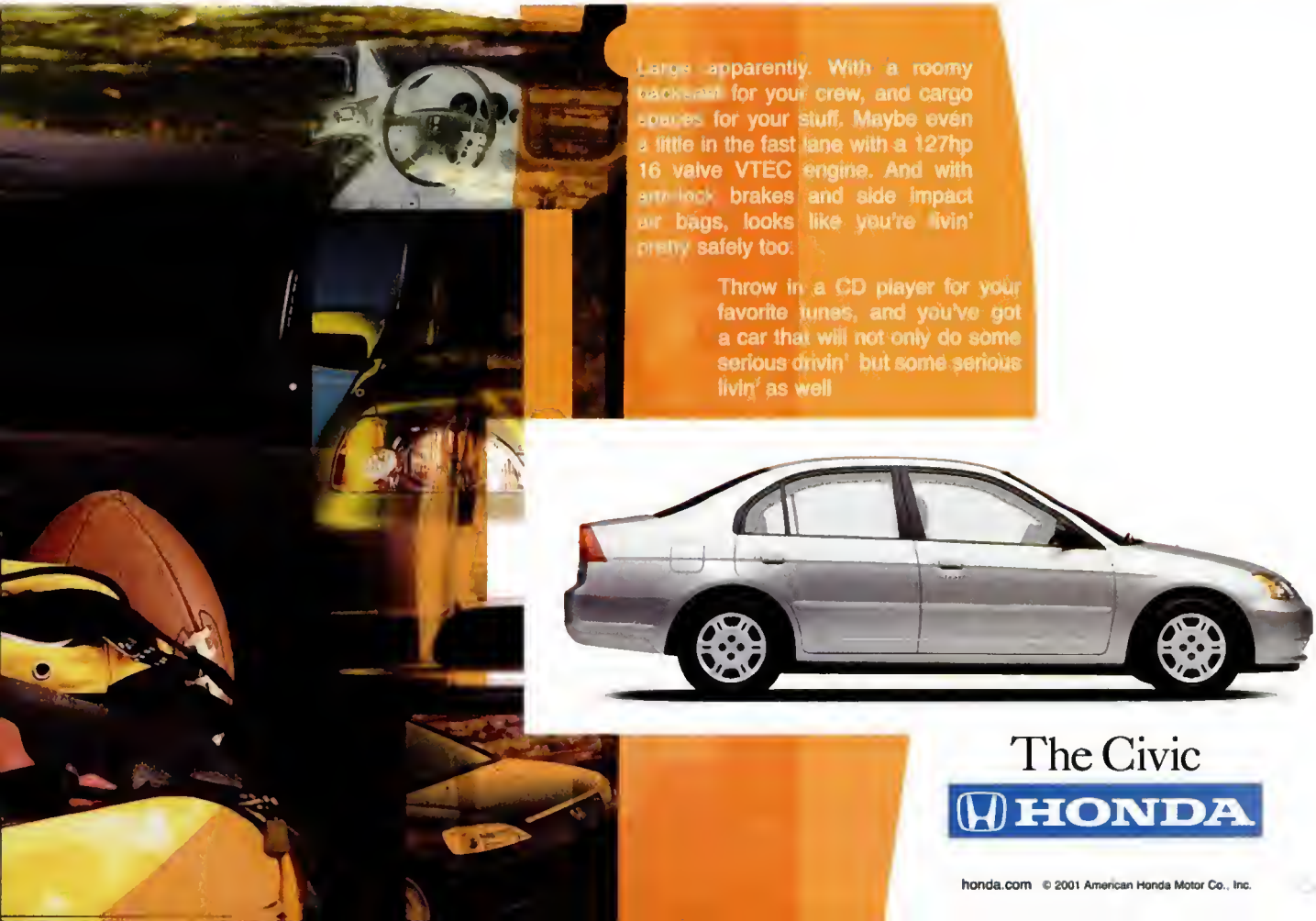


THIS MAGIC MOMENT...

[redacted] was the place to be at MAGIC. MAGIC attendees flowed through and cooled out from working the show with a light lunch buffet and VIBE Spot Radio Live! on Las Vegas Power 88 FM, presented by the NBA, and met MCA recording artist Rashaan Patterson. Specially invited guests visited the open bar, where they sampled Nestlé chocolates, specialty martinis from Tanqueray 10 Gin, and networked to the tunes of the legendary Awesome Two and Las Vegas's own DJ Phanes on the wheels of steel. VIBE and MAGIC partnered with hot urban clothing lines, like Phat Farm, Enyce, FUBU, Mecca, Eckō, Rocawear, and more, to produce VIP Buyer Packs for the fashion industry's elite. Shout-outs to all celebrities in attendance including Morris Chestnut, Anthony Anderson, Simon Rex, Joey McIntyre, Coolio, Rob Estes, Allan Houston, Dale Davis, John Starks, Sisqo, Jermaine Dupri, Outkast, Nelly, and Merlin Santana.

Ali Muhammad, associate director, marketing & artist relations; Kim Ford, brand promotions & sponsorship sales manager; Amy Gaskin, assistant coordinator, global merchandising group; and Walt Fraizer, NBA legend. Kim Ford; Carol Watson, associate publisher; MCA recording artist Rashaan Patterson; and Marilyn Batchelor, vice president strategic marketing, MCA. (Back row) Brother Haasan, marketing consultant, Outkast Apparel; Brian Owens, marketing manager, Nestlé; Carol Watson; guest; Kenard Gibbs, president; and Scean Ellis, Pacific SW sales manager. (Front row) Ali Muhammad; Kim Ford; Dre and Big Boi, Outkast. Kim Ford; Chris Abbott, key accounts manager, US Concepts/ Tanqueray 10 Gin; Def Soul recording artist Sisqo; and Carol Watson. MAGIC VIP Buyer receives special gift packs from VIBE and MAGIC with goodies from urban fashion clients. Al Sykes, president, Cuffs and Brenda, the President's Club receptionist. Tanqueray 10 Gin hosted the VIBE office birthday celebration for Kenard Gibbs. Emil Wilbekin, editor-in-chief; Tony Shellman, vice president of marketing, Enyce; Mandi Miranda, Tanqueray; Beth Gillies, sportswear director; Kenard Gibbs; and Kim Ford.

PHOTOS - Randy Carr (1-4), Courtesy of MAGIC International (5), Stella/I-Candy (6)





AN OLYMPIC STORY THAT TEACHES US THE VALUE OF SPORTSMANSHIP. AND HARDWARE.

The rarest medal in the Olympics wasn't created from gold, but a bolt.

The story begins on a cold, winter afternoon in Innsbruck at the 1964 Olympic two-man bobsled competition. A British team driven by Tony Nash had just completed its first run, which had put them in second place. Then they made a most disheartening discovery. They had broken a bolt on the rear axle of their sled, which would put them out of the competition.

At the bottom of the hill, the great Italian bobsled driver, Eugenio Monti, who was in first place, heard of their plight. Without hesitation, Monti removed the bolt from the rear axle of his own sled and sent it to the top of the hill. The British team affixed it to their sled and then completed their run down the mountain, winning the gold medal. Monti's Italian team took the bronze.

When asked about his act of sportsmanship, Eugenio Monti deflected any praise, saying, "Tony Nash did not win because I gave him a bolt. Tony Nash won because he was the best driver."

The story of Monti's selfless act spread. And because of it he was given the first De Coubertin Medal for sportsmanship. The award, named after the founder of the modern Olympics, is one of the noblest honors that can be bestowed upon an Olympic athlete.

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NEXT

PEOPLE ON THE VERGE

TWEET Like a Bird

Dressed to kill in a fringed skirt and tan boots, Tweet is perched on the edge of a burgundy leather sofa *feelin'* the music at Lot 61. The luxe N.Y.C. club is hosting the release party for *Big Boi & Dre Present... OutKast*. Above, there's a big screen broadcasting eye-popping videos; onstage, dancers gyrate with their ass cheeks hanging out. In this overstimulating environment, Tweet nearly fades into the background. Suddenly the DJ calls out, "Tweet's in the house!" She waves to acknowledge the applause and flashes a smile, knowing she has arrived.

It hasn't been a smooth road for Tweet, 30, born Cherlene Keys in Rochester, N.Y. Just two years ago, she was contemplating suicide after an excruciating failed stint in the girl group Sugah. Then Missy Elliott, who had met Tweet when they were recording in the same studio in Virginia in 1994, rescued her from depression by inviting her to sing on 2001's *Miss E... So Addictive*. "Tweet has an old soul and a very pure sound," says Elliott. "And I wanted to incorporate that old-school feeling with our futuristic vibe."

Now, Tweet's happily on the verge of releasing her diverse debut, *Southern Hummingbird*. Her musical proclivities, like OutKast's, transcend the usual boundaries of urban sound. She counts among her influences Björk and the Dixie Chicks, of whose unconventional approach she says, "It's just so refreshing to see country artists making music so that a person like me, who does hip hop and soul, can relate to what they're saying. It isn't just, 'I shot my dog in the morning.'"

Sure to surprise folks hooked on her computerized, funky debut single, "Oops (Oh My)," Tweet's album includes tracks like the politically incorrect "Smoking Cigarettes," a lovesick ballad with a farm-girl sound that helps to explain her CD's down-home title. In fact, her sexy, dog-eared alto is partly a result of her addiction to Marlboro Ultra Lights. "It dropped my voice some," Tweet confesses, flicking ash into a nearby tray. "But I don't even *want* to smoke. It's just a habit." She started smoking a few years ago during a difficult relationship. But tonight, her Marlboros are the only noticeable reminder of the rough times. Like her mentor—and those nasty cancer sticks—Tweet may well prove irresistibly addictive. *Jason King*



STYLING BY LYSA COOPER; MAKEUP BY GREG VAUGHN/L'ATELIER; HAIR BY CHUCK AMOS FOR BUMBLE AND BUMBLE/JUMP. GOLD-AND-BLACK STRIPED BRA AND RED LEATHER BELT, BOTH BY ZALOY. BLACK SPARKLE TOP BY HEATHERETTE. BLUE DENIM SKIRT AND BLACK-AND-WHITE ZIP-UP BOOTS WITH STRAPS, ALL BY VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

Photograph by **ADAM WEISS**

NeXT

PHIL THE AGONY No Pain, No Gain

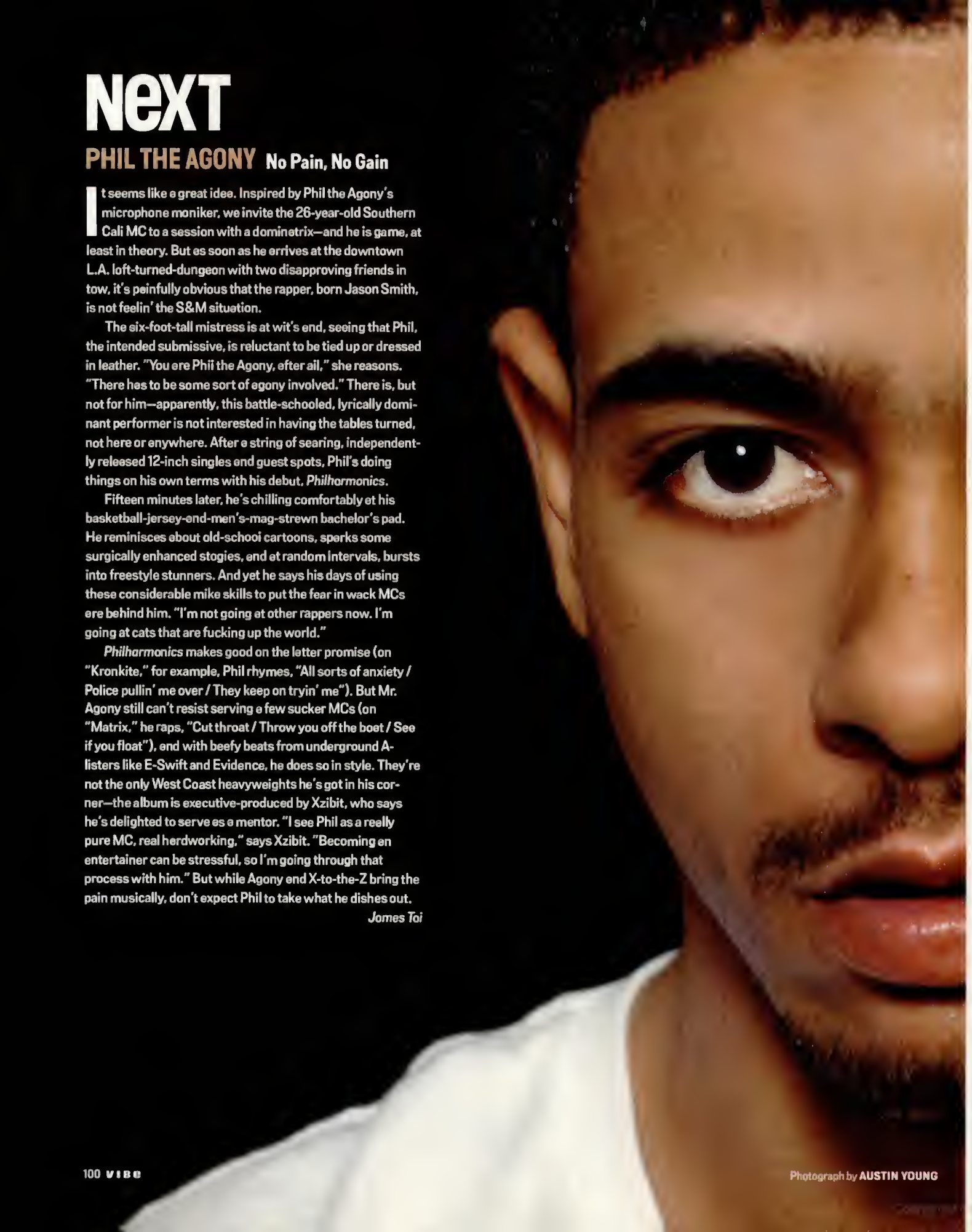
It seems like a great idea. Inspired by Phil the Agony's microphone moniker, we invite the 26-year-old Southern Cali MC to a session with a dominatrix—and he is game, at least in theory. But as soon as he arrives at the downtown L.A. loft-turned-dungeon with two disapproving friends in tow, it's painfully obvious that the rapper, born Jason Smith, is not feelin' the S&M situation.

The six-foot-tall mistress is at wit's end, seeing that Phil, the intended submissive, is reluctant to be tied up or dressed in leather. "You are Phil the Agony, after all," she reasons. "There has to be some sort of agony involved." There is, but not for him—apparently, this battle-schooled, lyrically dominant performer is not interested in having the tables turned, not here or anywhere. After a string of searing, independently released 12-inch singles and guest spots, Phil's doing things on his own terms with his debut, *Philharmonics*.

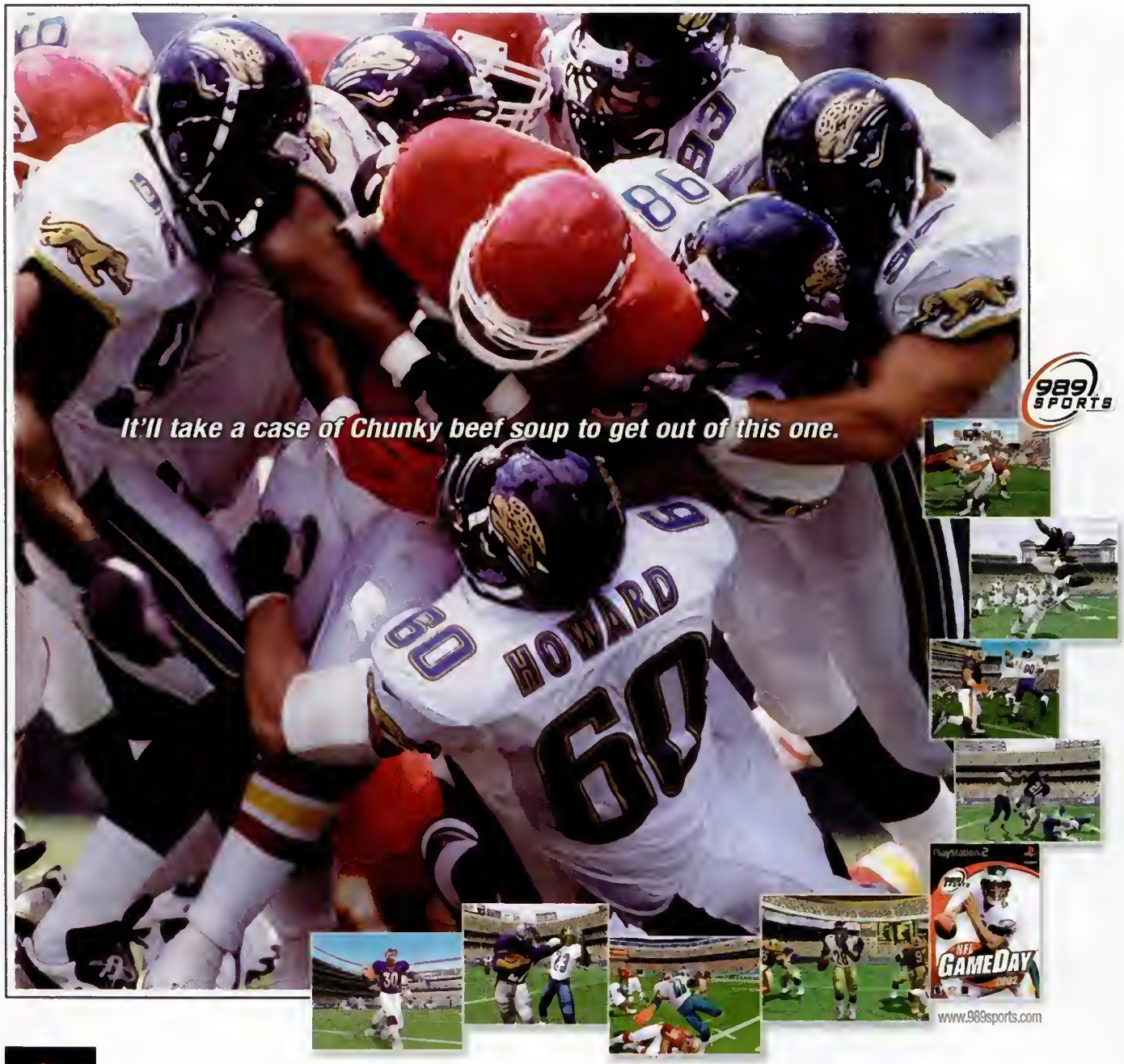
Fifteen minutes later, he's chilling comfortably at his basketball-jersey-and-men's-mag-strewn bachelor's pad. He reminisces about old-school cartoons, sparks some surgically enhanced stogies, and at random intervals, bursts into freestyle stunners. And yet he says his days of using these considerable mike skills to put the fear in wack MCs are behind him. "I'm not going at other rappers now. I'm going at cats that are fucking up the world."

Philharmonics makes good on the latter promise (on "Kronkite," for example, Phil rhymes, "All sorts of anxiety / Police pullin' me over / They keep on tryin' me"). But Mr. Agony still can't resist serving a few sucker MCs (on "Matrix," he raps, "Cut throat / Throw you off the boat / See if you float"), and with beefy beats from underground A-listers like E-Swift and Evidence, he does so in style. They're not the only West Coast heavyweights he's got in his corner—the album is executive-produced by Xzibit, who says he's delighted to serve as a mentor. "I see Phil as a really pure MC, real hardworking," says Xzibit. "Becoming an entertainer can be stressful, so I'm going through that process with him." But while Agony and X-to-the-Z bring the pain musically, don't expect Phil to take what he dishes out.

James Toi



Photograph by AUSTIN YOUNG



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Next

SHARISSA A Woman's Worth

Sharissa doesn't get mad. She gets even. Right now, she's in bed sharing a tub of Häagen-Dazs with ripped R&B crooner Tank as ex–Groove Theory cutie Bryce Wilson bangs on the apartment door. Sharissa's completely immersed in the moment, even though the fantasy could end with the director yelling "Cut!" at any second.

The video for her first single, "Any Other Night," is the story of a woman getting her groove back after being neglected by her man. It's a fitting introduction for Sharissa Dawes, 24, who has endured her share of painful relationships—she spent two years with a man who repeatedly told her she was worthless—but refuses to be crippled by them. Instead, she uses her experiences to bring an emotional rawness to the tales of love, heartbreak, and independence she cowrote for her debut, *No Half Steppin'*. "She's both soulful and ghetto, but not the contrived kind of ghetto," says Wilson, who produced the ballad "All These Years." "A lot of singers take components of '70s music but leave the struggle out. Sharissa's an artist who doesn't know anything but that."

Raised in the Bronx's Edenwald projects, Sharissa began singing in the streets outside her home 11 years ago. "My friends would beat-box, and I would sing over it," she says. Influenced by the women in her mother's record collection, including Deniece Williams and Patti LaBelle, Sharissa joined a band. By the time Jimmy Henchmen discovered her last November, she had perfected the brand of gritty, hip hop–influenced R&B that's showcased on *Steppin'*.

While Big Daddy Kane's signature hit was a challenge to wack rappers, the title of Sharissa's debut double dares potential suitors. "'No half steppin'—that's how you have to come to me now," says the singer. "I put up with a lot of things from men. But God put me here to make people smile, and I can't do that if I'm feeling compromised. So by the time I came to this album, I'd cried my last cry." And now that "Any Other Night" is burning up the airwaves, she's having the last laugh, too.

Ayana Byrd

STYLING BY LEILA YUSAF-M.; MAKEUP BY VANESSA EVELYN/KEN BARBOZA; HAIR BY ANGIE PHIPPS/DMA. BLUE DENIM ZIP-FRONT JACKET BY LEMON. BLACK LACE BRA BY VICTORIA'S SECRET; SILVER NECKLACE BY FRAGMENTS

Photograph by DANIEL GARRIGA

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ELAN Charmed Life

How did a 20-year-old Orthodox Jew from Los Angeles become the leed singer of the Wailers? For Elan, now 26, the opportunity to sing Jeh's music wes more divine intervention then lucky breek. After noticing him at a studio in L.A., Wailers guitarist Al Anderson played Elen's demo for celebrated bass player Aston "Family Man" Barratt, who felt the spirit in the young vocalist. "The Father moves in mysterious ways," says Barrett. "Out of darkness comes light; out of blackness comes white. Even Bob Marley's fether was white, end Bob wes chosen to do the work. So, too, Elan was chosen."

His first gig in Kingston was memorable. "Suddenly I was in front of thousands of people singing Bob Merley's songs with the bend I grew up listening to," Elan recalls. "Jamaicans thought I was of one of Bob's 'whities'—his white children! After seven shows, we incorporated my songs, which was the biggest blessing ever. It's like e reggae version of that movie *Rock Stor*."

Born to a Moroccan Jewish father and a Nativa American mother, Elan got an early push into showbiz. "My dad has a film clip showing me, age 3, in my Underoos singing 'The Gembler' and playing tha guitar," he says. Like thet precocious performence, his three-end-a-half-yeer tenure fronting the Wailers was hendled with plenty of chutzpah.

Sinca leaving the band in 2000, Elan has performed with notables such as Carlos Santana, recorded with Tony Kelly, the prominent dancehall producer, and seen his eptly titled hit "Dreams Come True" eppeer on the soundtrack of *Sex ond the City*. To the chagrin of many, he also converted Merley's enthem of insurgency, "Get Up, Stand Up," into e Timberland jingle.

These experiences converge on Elan's solo debut, *All Roods*, a contemplative, catchy fusion of influences featuring reggae heevyweights Sly and Robbie and hip pop meinstays the Neptunes. With his emphatic, raspy vocels, Elan updates Marley's "One Love" sentiment on "Check Yourself": "Words that hate and criticize are words thet open no one's eyes." Spoken like a true disciple. *Patricio Meschino*

Photograph by NIKO PHOTOGRAPHY 2001

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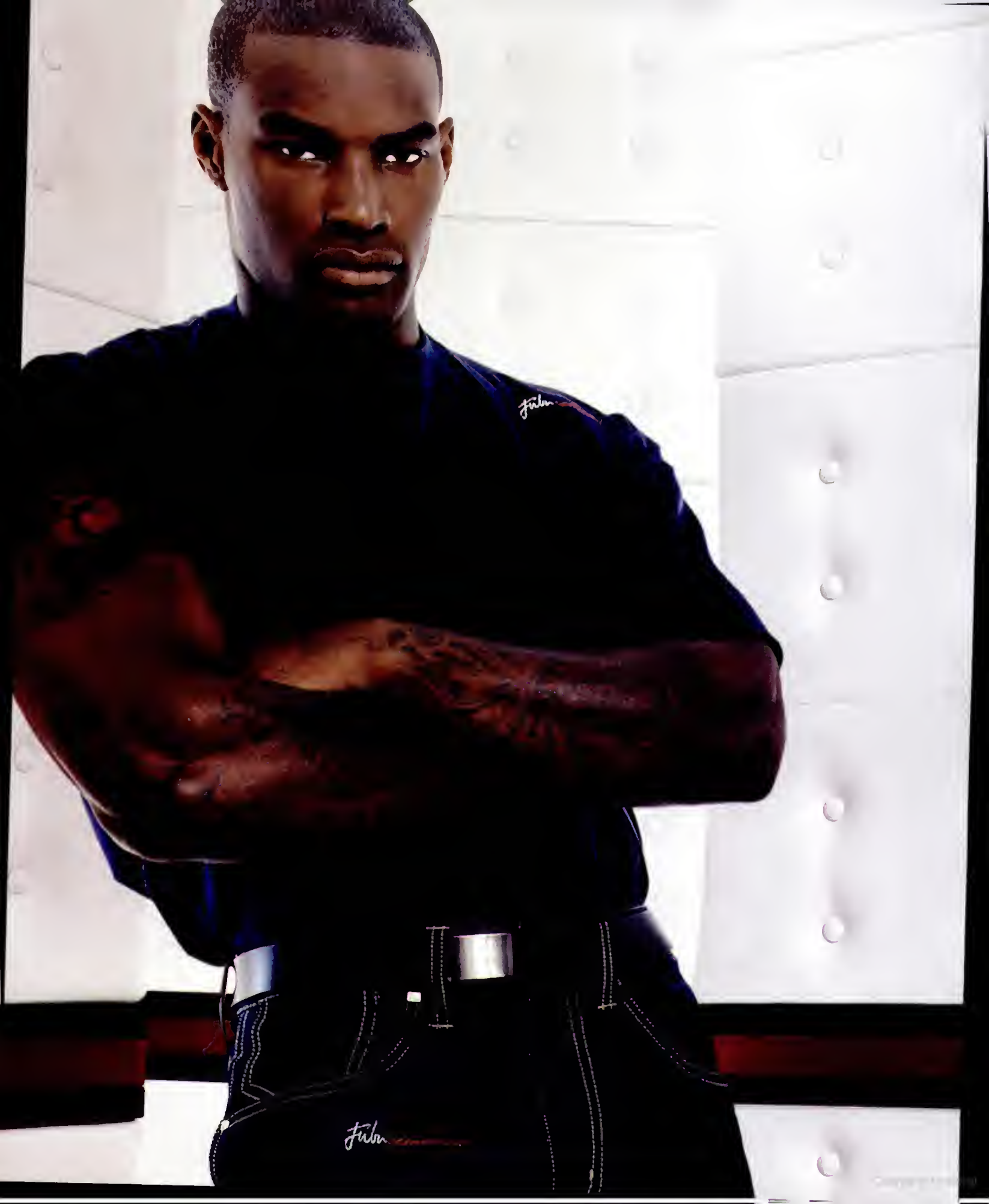
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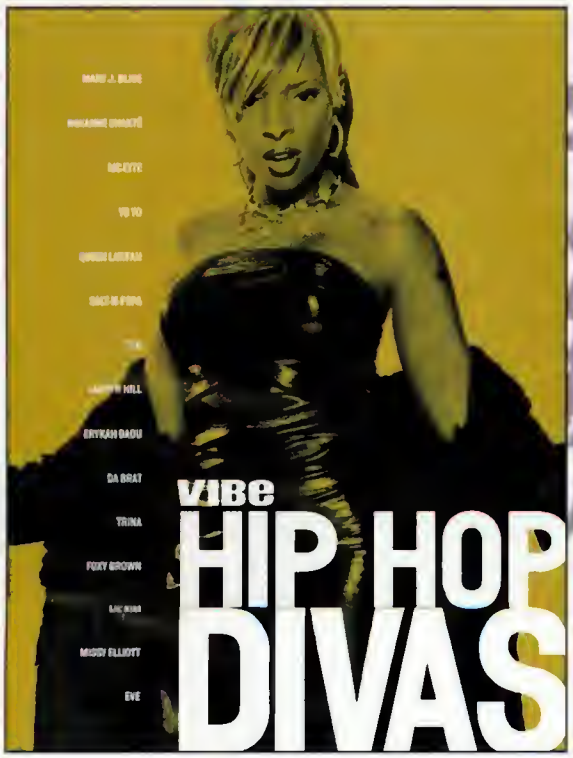
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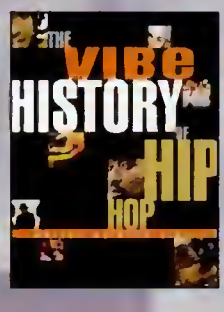
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UNBREAKABLE

After more than 30 years of creating music, Michael Jackson remains an enigma. Regina Jones sits down with the mysterious legend to discuss hip hop, life as a single parent, and the unexpected joys of an all-out water-balloon fight. Photographs by Jonathan Exley



I first met Michael Jackson some 33 years ago when Diana Ross introduced the Jackson 5—then a brand-new Motown act—to 350 music and media folk at the Daisy Club in Beverly Hills. My husband, Ken, and I were then publishing *Soul*, one of the first national black-entertainment newsmagazines.

Ten-year-old Michael already knew how to charm a crowd. Acknowledging Diana's support, he said, "After singing for four years and not becoming a star, I thought I would never be discovered—that is, until Miss Ross came along to save my career."

Just four months later, the Jackson 5's first single, "I Want You Back," soared to the top of the *Billboard* Hot 100 charts, followed two months later by "ABC." Thousands of letters from across the country poured into our mailbox. Responding to the Jackson's first tour, one reader wrote: "Those youngsters performed in a manner that could be harmful to one's health. The heart can only stand so much soul, and their performance was definitely an overdose."

Over the next decade, *Soul* kept up with the Jackson family as a guest at parties, weddings, and concerts. We were also regular visitors to the family home, where Michael—soft-spoken, polite, curious, and quiet—was usually off by himself, drawing or playing with his snakes and other pets, while his older brothers, cousins, and visitors played basketball. But when *Soul* stopped publishing in 1980, I lost touch with the family.

And then Michael became a pop-culture superstar, changing the face of music, dance, fashion, and music video with hit after hit. He was idolized and chased by fans and media wherever he went. He took an art form, refined and packaged it, and became an international icon. The American Music Awards recently named him the Artist of the Century. When it comes to the King of Pop, the world is insatiable.

You can tell a lot about someone by the people who work for him. Arriving at Michael's 2,700-acre Neverland Valley Ranch in Los Olivos, Calif., north of Santa Barbara, I'm greeted by some of the 70-odd members of Michael's exceedingly friendly staff, which helps the self-proclaimed King of Pop maintain the complex and welcomes busloads of visitors a year, mostly kids who suffer terminal illnesses.

Dressed in black slacks, white socks, black loafers, and a soft yellow shirt, Michael greets me with a warm hello and a big hug. He then excuses himself to see about his son, Prince, 5, and daughter, Paris, 3, who have just returned from a long walk and are excitedly chattering to their dad about their day. The governess, who closely resembles Michael's mother, Katherine, suggests I have a brief look around the ranch before dark. So I take off in a battery-powered golf cart, while Michael spends time with his babies.

I discover an amusement park, playground, train station, arcade, zoo, swimming pool, Jacuzzi, bumper-car tent, and various areas where animals roam free. I spot a llama, a parrot, a cheetah, a pony, and several deer.

Michael is ready to talk when I return 45 minutes later. I've brought along a bound volume of *Soul*, and he looks at the old photos and laughs at himself, his brothers, and a picture of Diana Ross. "Do you remember interviewing me when I was little?" he asks, reminding me of the time *Soul* talked to him through his "interpreter," Janet. "It wasn't a game, it was real," he says. "I felt afraid. I felt that if my sister was there, the person would go easier on me."

Often very animated, Michael goes from a whisper to raucous laughter in a split second. The only matter that he refuses to address is his plastic surgery. "That's a stupid question," he says. "That's one reason that I didn't do interviews for years."

At a time when stars routinely boast about their Bentleys and bling-bling, Michael is singularly modest. He brushes off a question about his financial health—there have been recent reports of trouble—saying only, "I'm taken care of fine." Michael makes money when he sleeps. He owns half of Sony/ATV Music Publishing, which includes most of the Beatles catalog as well as songs by Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Miles Davis, Babyface, and Elvis.

"JAY-Z IS HIP, THE NEW THING. HE HAS TAPPED INTO THE NERVE OF POPULAR CULTURE."

At 43, Michael is indisputably back. *Invincible*, his first album in four years, was No. 1 on the *Billboard* 200 chart. His two sold-out tribute shows at Madison Square Garden last September (just before the terrorist attacks) were later aired as a CBS special watched by more than 25.7 million viewers, making it that network's highest-rated music special of all time.

As we resume the conversation that began so many years ago, I discover that, in spite of all the flash and tumult of Michael's time in the spotlight, he's remarkably unchanged—still caring, inquisitive, and sensitive.

VIBE: How is it to be competing for sales with the likes of 'N Sync and Britney Spears, children who were basically born at the height of your fame?

MJ: It's a rarity. I had No. 1 records in 1969 and '70, and still entered the charts in 2001 at No. 1. I don't think any other artist has that range. It's a great honor. I'm happy, I don't know what else to say. I'm glad people accept what I do.

VIBE: What are your thoughts on the current state of R&B?

MJ: I don't categorize music. Music is music. They changed the word R&B to rock 'n' roll. It has always been, from Fats Domino to Little Richard to Chuck Berry. How can we discriminate? It is what it is—great music, you know.

VIBE: Are you feeling hip hop?

MJ: I like a lot of it, a *lot* of it. I like the music. I don't like the dancing that much. It looks like they're doing aerobics.

VIBE: How did you decide to feature Biggie Smalls on "Unbreakable," off *Invincible*?

MJ: It wasn't my idea, actually. It was Rodney Jerkins's, one of the writer/producers working on the album. It was my idea to put a rap part on the song, and he said, "I know just the perfect one—Biggie." He put it in, and it worked perfectly.

VIBE: Why did you choose Jay-Z for the remix of the first single, "You Rock My World"?

MJ: He's hip, the new thing, and he's with the kids today. They like his work. He's tapped into the nerve of popular culture. It just made good sense.

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MUSIC MAN:
"Out of the bliss comes magic and creativity."



HOME BOY: Michael Jackson on the grounds of his 2,700-acre ranch, Neverland

VIBE: What was it like for you to appear at New York's Hot 97 Summer Jam concert as Jay-Z's guest?
MJ: I just showed up and gave him a hug. There was a tumultuous explosion of applause and stomping, a lovely, lovely welcome, and I was happy about that. It was a great feeling—the love, the *love*.

VIBE: Does it bother you to see people emulate you, such as Usher, Sisqo, Ginuwine, and even Destiny's Child?
MJ: I don't mind it at all. These are artists who grew up with my music. When you grow up listening to somebody you admire, you tend to become them. You want to look like them, to dress like them. When I was little, I was James Brown, I was Sammy Davis Jr., so I understand it. It's a compliment.

VIBE: Did you know that you were creating timeless classics when you were recording *Thriller* and *Off The Wall*?
MJ: Yes, not to be arrogant, but yes. Because I know great material when I hear it, and melodically and sonically and musically, it's so moving. They keep the promise.

VIBE: Do you feel there's greater acceptance of black artists these days?
MJ: I think people have always admired black music since the beginning of time, if you want to go back to Negro spirituals. Today, the market is just accepting the fact that *that's* the sound. From Britney to 'N Sync, they're all doing the R&B thing. Even Barry Gibb of the Bee Gees, he always tells me [*imitating a British accent*], "Man, we do R&B." I say, Barry, I don't categorize it, but it's great music. I understand where he's coming from. I love great music—it has no color, it has no boundaries.

VIBE: You seem to be enjoying life as a single parent.
MJ: I never had so much fun in all my life. That's the truth. Because I'm this big kid, and now I get to see the world through the eyes of the really young ones. I learn more from them than they learn from me. I'm constantly trying things and testing things on them to see what works and what doesn't. Children are always the best judges to monitor something. If you can get the kids, you've got it. That's why *Harry Potter* is so successful—it's a family-oriented movie. You can't go wrong there. We want a wide demographic, and that's why I try not to say things in my lyrics that offend parents. I don't want to be like that. We weren't raised to be like that. Mother and Joseph [Michael's father] wouldn't say stuff like that.

"CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS THE BEST JUDGES. IF YOU CAN GET THE KIDS, YOU'VE GOT IT."

VIBE: What do Prince and Paris listen to?
MJ: They listen to all of my music, and they love classical, which plays all around the ranch. They like any good dance music.

VIBE: How would you feel about your children becoming pop icons, based upon your experience?
MJ: I don't know how they would handle that. It would be tough. I really don't know. It's hard, since most children of celebrities end up becoming self-destructive because they can't live up to the talent of the parent. People always used to say to Fred Astaire Jr., "Can you dance?" And he couldn't. He didn't have any rhythm, but his father



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was this genius dancer. It doesn't mean that it has to be passed on. I always tell my children, You don't have to sing, you don't have to dance. Be who you want to be, as long as you're not hurting anybody. That's the main thing.

VIBE: Which artists—past and present—inspire you?
MJ: Stevie Wonder is a musical prophet. All of the early Motown. All the Beatles. I'm crazy about Sammy Davis Jr., Charlie Chaplin, Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson—the real entertainers, the real thing, not just gimmicks, showstoppers. When James Brown was with the Famous Flames, it was unbelievable. There are so many wonderful singers—Whitney Houston, Barbra Streisand, Johnny Mathis. Real stylists. You hear one line, and you know who it is. Nat "King" Cole, great stuff. Marvin Gaye, Sam Cooke—they are all ridiculous.

VIBE: How involved were you in selecting the artists to perform in your 30th anniversary special?
MJ: I wasn't involved at all.

VIBE: How were you able to let go of something so big and so special?
MJ: Trust.
(continued on page 116)

BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASK

Michael Jackson and the souls of black folk. By Karen R. Good

Boogie's got me in a supertrance....
"Blame It on the Boogie," Michael Jackson, 1978

When Michael Jackson is seized, he shakes his head and his hands and kicks up his leg, laughs, cries, and hollers, "Whoooooooooo!" That, people, is the love movement. It is grace, informed by Africa, Ben Vereen, Fred Astaire, Sammy Davis Jr., and, as Michael said, "those beautiful children, those black kids who live in the ghettos, you know, the inner cities, who are brilliant." What do you know about surrender? Have you any idea of the faith required to give your body over, completely, to the other side? With gut and foot, the spirits come down, you are mounted. And, baby, they ride. But there is a line between possession, which is when something takes you over, and obsession, wherein you take hold of something and act as if possessed.

OPRAH: Are you pleased with the way you look?
MICHAEL: I'm never pleased with anything. I'm a perfectionist; it's part of who I am.
OPRAH: And so when you look in the mirror now, at the image that looks back at you, are there days when you say, "I kinda like this or I like the way my hair..."
MICHAEL: No, I'm never pleased with myself. I try not to look in the mirror.

In some African religious ceremonies, faces are painted white to represent the dead and create distance between this world and the next. Michael Jackson, in space, song, and image, has so radically distanced himself, he is eulogized. The dead he raised on *Thriller* just won't rest. So, to demons and everyone else, Michael sends these messages: I'm *Bad*. I'm *Dangerous*. *Invincible*. Just so you know.

Michael is from the school of Motown, which was Berry Gordy making black music for consumers of black music, not necessarily black music for black people. Motown was the sound of young America, and the British invasion did damage to this vision, whitening it, asserting itself as a kind of blackness. So, at the height of his stardom in about 1983, there is Michael in a Sgt. Pepper jacket and Eddie Van Halen playing the guitar solo on "Beat It." And so goes the story of black music: You want black authenticity, but you need white love. Get it? Then you go *pop!*



REMEMBER THE TIME: Michael Jackson in 1977

I sense anger, white hot.

When Michael was in New York last year for the startup of his Heal the Kids Foundation, Bill O'Reilly, of *The O'Reilly Factor*, declared, "America is done with this guy. He's a weirdo." What's so weird about a black man wanting to be white and, having the means, becoming so? It's not that Michael doesn't like being black—"vitiligo" was how he blithely explained his two-facedness—it's that he's indifferent to blackness ("It doesn't matter if you're black or white"). Soon his blackness became intolerable, pathologized. What Paul Laurence Dunbar wrote of in "We Wear the Mask."

Next thing you know, my grown friend Betsy is whispering, "He dyed himself," like she's little girl with a secret. Exasperated, Imani asks, "What's next? Chop off a foot?"

That doesn't mean they don't love Michael. It means they are concerned. Michael would like us to turn a blind eye to his metamorphosis; loosen our grip. He acts like we just met. Facing Michael Jackson is essentially facing ourselves. But since we're the black family and we're not supposed to talk about madness, we deal as we always have with the unfathomable and horrific: We marvel, then laugh. A black man, our shining star, has turned white right before our eyes!

It will take so much more than that to turn me away. Because I know that this is ultimately about having the ability to put people in trances. Mostly I know that this is about looking at both your hands and feeling unworthy, even with all that proof—beauty, rhythm, and God's hand on your back. But unworthiness is an illusion, a demonic possession. And possessions don't scare away the holy. Michael Jackson, for all his long talk about monsters, could never scare me away; like mischievous little boys or hurting souls, all he really wants is a gentle embrace.

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POP LIFE: "People have admired black music since the beginning of time."

VIBE: What was your experience on September 11?
MJ: I was in New York [after performing at Madison Square Garden on September 7 and 10], and I got a call from friends in Saudi Arabia that America was being attacked. I turned on the news and saw the Twin Towers coming down, and I said, Oh my God. I screamed down the hotel hallway to all our people, Everybody get out, let's leave now! Marlon Brando was on one end, our security was on the other end. We were all up there, but Elizabeth Taylor was at another hotel. We all got out of there as quickly as we could. We jumped in the car, but there were these girls who had been at the show the night before, and they were banging on the windows, running down the street screaming. Fans are so loyal. We hid in New Jersey. It was unbelievable—I was scared to death.

VIBE: On another tip altogether, what do you do for recreation?
MJ: I like water-balloon fights. We have a water-balloon fort here, and we have a red team and a blue team. We have slings and cannons, and you are drenched by the time the game is over. There's a timer, and whoever gets the most points is the winner. If I'm going to do some kind of sport, I have to laugh. I don't do anything like basketball or golf. Basketball is very competitive, and so is tennis; they make you angry. I'm not into that. It should be therapeutic. I also like to go to amusement parks, hang with animals, things like that.

VIBE: Do you have a fantasy of something that you'd like to see in your lifetime?
MJ: I would like to see an international children's holiday to honor our children, because the family bond has been broken. There's a Mother's Day and there's a Father's Day, but there's no children's day. It would mean a lot. It really would. World peace. I hope that our next generation will get to see a peaceful world, not the way things are going now.

VIBE: Has singing ever stopped being fun and become work?
MJ: It's always been fun. Unless I get physically sick, it's always fun. I still love it.

VIBE: Many of us see you as a historic figure, an innovator who has set a standard that still exists in music. Where does Michael Jackson go from here?
MJ: Thank you, thank you. I have deep love for film, and I want to pioneer and innovate in the medium of film—to write and direct and produce movies, to bring incredible entertainment.

VIBE: What kinds of movies? Are you looking at scripts?
MJ: Yes, but nothing has been finalized yet.

VIBE: Are you ever lonely?
MJ: Of course. If I'm onstage, I'm fine there. But you can have a house full of people and still be lonely from within. I'm not complaining, because I think it's a good thing for my work.

VIBE: Tell me about the inspiration for "Speechless." It's very loving.
MJ: You'll be surprised. I was with these kids in Germany, and we had a big water-balloon fight—I'm serious—and I was so happy after the fight that I ran upstairs in their house and wrote "Speechless." Fun inspires me. I hate to say that, because it's such a romantic song. But it was the fight that did it. I was happy, and I wrote it in its entirety right there. I felt it would be good enough for the album. Out of the bliss comes magic, wonderment, and creativity.

VIBE: Do you collect anything?
MJ: I like anything having to do with Shirley Temple, the Little Rascals, and the Three Stooges. I love Curly. I love him so much that I did a book on him. I got hold of his daughter, and we wrote the book together.

"MOST CHILDREN OF CELEBRITIES BECOME SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BECAUSE THEY CAN'T LIVE UP TO THE TALENT OF THE PARENT."

VIBE: Is there anything that you would like to say to VIBE readers?
MJ: I love Quincy Jones. I really do. And also, I want to tell the readers not to judge a person by what they hear, or even what they read, unless they heard it from the person himself. There is so much tabloid sensationalism. Don't fall prey to it, it's ugly. I'd like to take all the tabloids and burn them. I want you to print that! Some of them try to disguise themselves, but they are still the tabloids

VIBE: Finally, how do you channel your creativity?
MJ: I don't force it, I let nature take its course. I don't sit at the piano and think, *I'm going to write the greatest song of all time.* It doesn't happen. It has to be given to you. I believe it's already up there before you are born, and then it drops right into your lap. It's the most spiritual thing in the world. When it comes, it comes with all of the accompaniments, the strings, the bass, the drums, the lyrics, and you're just the medium through which it comes, the channel. Sometimes I feel guilty putting my name on the songs—"written by Michael Jackson"—because it's as if the heavens have done it already. Like Michelangelo would have this huge piece of marble from the quarries of Italy, and he'd say, "Inside is a sleeping form." He takes a hammer and chisel, and he's just freeing it. It's already in there. It's already there.

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STAKES IS HIGH

After 1994's *Illmatic*, he was hailed as the second coming of Rakim. But Nas failed to follow up with a strong effort. Eight years later, with the release of *Stillmatic*, the Prince of Queensbridge seeks to silence all haters. Serena Kim talks to the introverted MC about his fear of success and the lyrical battle with Jay-Z. Photographs by Alex Tehrani



SMOKIN' MC: "I don't want to be in pop America"

It's arctic in the cavernous inner sanctum of Manhattan's Sony Music Studios. But Nas, 28, won't let that ruin his upbeat mood. He pulls his Avirex jacket closer around him, sinks into a black leather couch, and mellows out to John Coltrane. In the next room, engineers are mixing down Nas's latest album, *Stillmatic*—his bold attempt to redeem himself from Jay-Z's disses and re-establish his MC status.

Your man has a lot on his plate. The New York streets are buzzing with talk about Nas as he works hard to get back the heat that was once synonymous with his name, while maintaining a steely, I-don't-give-a-fuck attitude. But the more he acts like he doesn't care, the more it becomes apparent that Nas worries plenty, about winning as much as losing. "If I sold 10 million, I'd be scared to death," he says, "because then I would have to do it again."

Steve Stoute, executive producer and A&R for Nas's previous albums *It Was Written* and *I Am...*, once told him he was scared of success. "I backed away," Nas agrees. "I don't want to be in pop America." Yet he worked with the pop-savvy Track Masters on 1996's *Written* and 1999's *I Am...*, and each went double platinum. By contrast, 1994's *Illmatic*, an indisputable classic, moved just over 800,000 units and featured producers who were more street-conscious, such as Large Professor and DJ Premier. "Track Masters opened up a whole new door for Nas," says Lenny Nicholson, director of A&R at Columbia Records. "They took him to the next level."

The Track Masters put Nas on the *Billboard* charts, but their glossy production style and Nas's acquired ghetto-fabulous lyricism ("Gucci this, Fendi that," he rhymed) disappointed fans who were looking for *Illmatic*'s depth and poetry ("Stay civilized / Time flies / Though incarcerated, your mind dies / I hate it when your moms cries"). Even people who ate up his more commercial material quickly lost interest. His last solo project, 1999's *Nastradamus*, was loathed by both fans and critics, and earned roughly half of *I Am*'s sales. Nas's explanation for his subsiding popularity—that he intentionally rejected mainstream success—smacks of sour grapes. "That's like a basketball player saying he doesn't want a championship ring, he's just playing hard," says a childhood friend, who declined to be named. "Everybody wants a championship ring. Everybody wants success."

Nas does admit that he's dismayed at having alienated so many people. "You don't want to disappoint the ones who are really rooting for you," he says. "And it's kind of bad when they're like, 'Damn, he's not doing what I thought he could do.' But as long as my niggas—the true niggas that's really fucking with me—fuck with me, I ain't gonna let them down." He may be right. His mentor Large Professor sees *Stillmatic* as a symbolic return to 1994: "He does the hard-core stuff, his roots, and it's better suited to him." *Stillmatic* is ambitious in scope, the writing more thoughtful than in the past. On "Rewind," he flaunts his storytelling skills by telling a story backwards with vivid thematic execution comparable to *Written*'s "I Gave You Power."

Before his well-documented stint in the Queensbridge Houses, Nas lived in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. There, at age 4, Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones exhibited a precocious knack for music. "He would play trumpet on the stoop in Brooklyn, and people would stop and admire him because they thought he had a greatness in him," remembers his father, jazz trumpeter Olu Dara, 60. "But I stopped him from playing, because his lip was hanging down, and I said, You can't

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play anymore because your lip is going to get disfigured. Wait until you're seven or eight years old. He was furious—very hurt and very disappointed." By the time Nas did reach the prescribed age, he was only interested in writing short stories and drawing cartoons. He never picked up the horn again.

The gifted but introverted MC was always a bit of an outsider among his peers. "He came outside once in a blue," says one friend from his boyhood days. Not much has changed; Nas doesn't love going out to clubs, and in his free time, he prefers the ultimate loner's pastime—metal detecting in his friends' backyards in Queens, looking for nothing in particular.

"WHY THE HELL AM I IN THIS BATTLE? I KNOW IT'S HIP HOP, BUT LET TWO OTHER RAPPERS DO IT."

Nas is such the consummate introvert that he can come off as standoffish and distrustful. At a photo shoot in a vacant lot near Brooklyn Heights, he complains about the cold and is unwilling to vibe with the photographer. Even in his friendships, allies are readily turned into enemies. On *Stillmatic*'s "Destroy & Rebuild," he busts criticism on old comrades from his QB stomping grounds, especially Cormega and Prodigy. He also ridicules his former protégé, Nature, for his less-than-stellar recording career: "I can't hold your hand through this shit," spits Nas. "I'm not your father."

"I don't need Nas to hold my hand," responds Nature. "I'm a grown-ass man. I got my own family, my own team, my own plans. I'm putting out an album this year. We're just not on the same page."

"I'm not in it to go back and forth with these guys," Nas says, his voice rising in the dark of an SUV at the shoot. "That's why I made 'Destroy & Rebuild.' So many people were talking about me. Whether they love me or they hate me—I think it's both—I had to speak on it." He feels comfortable dissing others, and can't understand why Jay-Z disses him on "Takeover."

"I don't want controversy; I don't need it," says Nas. "I feel disgusting, like I got some nasty mud on me, with all these eyes on me and shit. Sometimes I sit around and say, Why the hell am I in this battle? I know it's hip hop, but let two other niggas do it." Nevertheless, Nas's ego won't let him resist. On "Ether," he says to Jay-Z, "In '88, you was getting chased to your building / Calling my crib / And I didn't even give you my numbers / All I did was give you a style for you to run with."

Though this battle is certainly livening things up—Jay-Z's response to "Ether" had Angie Martinez tallying up listener votes on New York's Hot 97 in December to decide whose battle rhyme was better (Nas won)—Nas's contradictions are impossible to reconcile. "Jay-Z needs to grow up," says Nas, his brow furrowed. "He doesn't have to say some foul shit, like, on 'Hola' Hovito,' 'If I ain't better than Big, I'm the closest one.'" But at the same time, it appears that Nas is trying to play Tupac to Jay-Z's Biggie. "He doesn't have to talk about Tupac. Tupac is dissing him from the grave," he continues, as if he channels 'Pac on the regular. "By him shouting the niggas out, you would think it's love. It ain't love. It's him pulling energy."

Yet, doesn't Nas do that very thing by reenacting the shootings of Biggie and Tupac in his video for "Got Ur Self A..."? He doesn't think so. "This video is absolutely not the same as me pulling energy," he insists. "I'm saying, bring me pictures of Biggie and Tupac, and give me both of their crowns, and I'm gonna bury it back with them at the end of the video."

In addition to sharpening up his rhymes, Nas has also concentrated on his beats. He reconvened with Large Professor to produce simple soundscapes that complement his lyrics with minimal fanfare. He kept his studio location in Long Island undisclosed and studio heads to a minimum, and cut down on the Henny in order to stay focused.

The extra security was needed because bootlegging has been a constant threat for Nas. Although many New York MCs have had their work pirated, *Illmatic* is an extreme example. "His third album, *I Am...*, was bootlegged heavy," attests producer L.E.S., who has worked with Nas since 1992. "When we were about to do skits, somebody comes in the Hit Factory with the CD, all the songs mastered and mixed. We were like, We can't do this." The album wasn't scheduled to come out for another two months. In a hasty decision, Nas and Stoute substituted five tracks—rushed studio slop jobs that boasted nothing but marquee cameos like Scarface and DMX. Now, noteworthy material like "Blaze a 50" and "Drunk by Myself" can only be found on New York street corners laid out on blankets.

Nas has protected *Stillmatic* more successfully, and the bootleg that hit the streets a couple of weeks before the release was a paltry offering. "There's none of that loose copying of songs," says his engineer, Kevin Crouse. "We don't make CDs unless it goes straight to Nas or to A&R."

The rapper must protect his jewels carefully, since he has a mouth to feed. In fact, he made sure his daughter, Destiny, 7, will always eat by naming her the executive producer of *Stillmatic*, guaranteeing her royalty points for the rest of her life. Nas says he couldn't have recorded the album without her. "She came in there, got me organized, gave me some words to rap about, helped me out with some of the choruses," he says, his voice getting warm and fuzzy.

So the question remains, has Nas fallen off? Though he may not be the rap icon he was in the mid-'90s, he still ranks among the best lyricists in the game. He seems jubilant about his work, and his insecurities seem to have waned. "I'm sorry it took so long, but it's all about timing, strategy, and war," he says. "People are happy because I represent an era in hip hop that a lot of these rappers don't represent. They're happy to see me back and stronger than ever." Sometimes you have to lose in order to know how good it is to win.



LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON: Nas with his dad, Olu Dara, in 1996

STEPHANIE BERGER


ICE CUBE
MIKE EPPS
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NEW LINE CINEMA
COMING SOON

SOUL FOOD

There were too many cooks in Angie Stone's creative kitchen, until she cleared the room and took control. Now she's making beautiful music her way. By Joseph Patel

It's difficult to imagine Angie Stone, with her knowing, sassy warmth, needing to exorcise demons, but the veteran singer is doing just that. Stone, a sweet woman who draws people in with her motherly figure and chocolate brown eyes, speaks of her recently released sophomore album, *Mahogany Soul*, as if it were a cathartic experience. "For the first time, I'm doing this alone," says Stone, 36, a native South Carolinian who now lives in a quiet section of northern New Jersey. "I love this album because it stretches out and reaches you. It's the real me. I finally put Angie Stone into the mix."

Stone's 1999 solo debut, *Black Diamond*, offered folks a renewed faith in down-home, heartfelt R&B, and sold more than 750,000 copies. But the CD's release masked the singer's ongoing personal and professional troubles. In addition to enduring an emotional breakup with D'Angelo, her on-and-off lover for six years, Stone felt frustrated by her battles for artistic control over the project. So she navigated her way through her struggles by recording *Mahogany Soul* with a new label, J Records. This time, she executive produced the CD and had a hand in all of the songwriting. The result is a more refined, mature soul album. It's also a testament to a woman's strength, with songs like "20 Dollars," which chastises deadbeat fathers, and the successful first single, "Brotha," a celebration of strong, caring men.

But the problems she had with *Black Diamond* still rankle. "I like my last record," Stone says, nursing a bottle of water in a midtown New York City lounge, "but there were a lot of hands in the project that shouldn't have been there." She says A&R and marketing people at her old label (Arista) frequently toyed with the presentation of her craft—a skill she refined as part of electro-rap trio Sequence ("Funk You Up") in the early '80s and, later, as the lead singer and chief songwriter in the soul outfit Vertical Hold ("Seems You're Much Too Busy"). She cites as an example the label's desire to release "Everyday" as a single simply because it was cowritten by D'Angelo. The song was so old, Stone didn't even want it on the record. It was eventually included, but not released as a proper single. "Spiritually, was I into my first album? No," she says.

"With *Mahogany Soul*, you definitely see Angie take shape as a major, major artist," says Clive Davis, the ex-Arista honcho who handpicked Stone to follow him to J Records. "She's very much an independent woman, and it shows in her music." But Davis diplomatically disagrees with the assessment that Stone faced rancor at Arista, pointing out that she wouldn't have followed him if her handling had been unendurable.

The need for control bears on other aspects of her life, and she admits that this troubles her. "My biggest issue has been my weight," Stone says. She is encouraged by artists such as Jill Scott who have garnered popularity through talent rather than image. "I learned to accept things I cannot change," Stone says. "People don't see you on the radio." And yet she continues to lament the role her weight might have played in the dissolution of her relationship with D'Angelo.

Their union ended for good two years after the birth of their child, Michael, now 4. Stone, who also has a 17-year-old daughter, Diamond, from an earlier marriage, blames the media and people surrounding D'Angelo for making him dissatisfied with her appearance, which didn't fit the svelte ideal of an R&B star's lover. "A lot of what happened with us stemmed from outside pressure," she says almost wistfully. Though the two remain close friends, Stone recognizes D'Angelo's personal limitations. "At some point in everyone's career you begin to hear the roar of the crowd. And when the roar of the crowd drowns out the one voice that matters, you get lost and you just pray to God you're found again," she says. D'Angelo declined to comment.

For Stone, *Mahogany* is all about persevering through pain and loss, and then beginning to heal. "It's about having people say, 'I can relate to that,'" she explains. "It means I've tapped into one or two or five or 10 people, and then, hopefully, the majority feel the same way." And for someone who is seeking to control her life, connecting with people on her own terms is a deeply satisfying development.

Photograph by **DAVID DREBIN**




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FUNKY DIVA

Dawn Robinson slayed us with her sexy turns and soaring voice in En Vogue and Lucy Pearl. But for all her record sales, she didn't stack much paper. Craig Seymour examines her battle scars and born-again solo career.

Photographs by Isabel Snyder

Dawn Robinson is riding through an industrial section of West Oakland so rough it's called Dogtown. It's where the former En Vogue and Lucy Pearl vocalist now lives in a two-bedroom loft with her boyfriend and manager, Chris Thomas. Aging warehouses line the landscape. Train tracks jut across the wide streets like jagged scars. And at one point during the short ride to lunch at a nearby Chinese spot, she has to swerve wildly around a pile of dirty-ass baby clothes that someone has dumped in the middle of her block. "This is nasty!" screams Robinson, 33. "Who wants to live around this? This is not a dump. People *live* here."

If it's surprising that a songbird of her fame and talent is living in these circumstances, it's because Robinson's career has generally involved far more show than business. This is why she's so focused on the release of her long-awaited solo album, *Dawn*. She hopes it will jolt her into Janet/Whitney/Mariah territory and allow her to profit financially after years of toiling. "I expect to be a huge star, much bigger than what I've done with *those* groups," she says.

Clearly, Robinson is pinning a lot of hopes on this album—a charming, if far from groundbreaking, collection of midtempo Lucy Pearl–like grooves and harmony-laden tracks evoking vintage En Vogue. But you can't discount her track record. Thus far, she has only been involved in successful projects. And despite the respective talents of her former band mates, Dawn was always the one who commanded your attention. Her edgy soprano and spitfire attitude fueled smashes like Pearl's "Dance Tonight" and En Vogue's stirring mini rock-opera "Don't Let Go (Love)." "Nobody could sing that shit but Dawn," says Rico Wade of Organized Noize, who produced the track. "What sold that song was that Dawn had a rock 'n' roll vibe. She's a rock star."

Indeed, rock is in her blood. Growing up in New London, Conn., young Dawn would hear her free-spirited pops blasting the tunes of Led Zeppelin. Her Motown-loving mom, on the other hand, provided some early diva training. "My mother thought she was Diana Ross," Robinson says.

The singer arguably got her rebellious spirit from her mom, Barbara Robinson, who now works as a hospital lab technician. When Robinson's post–En Vogue solo deal at Aftermath sat in limbo while she waited for Dr. Dre to find time to work on the album, her momma called up Interscope chairman Jimmy Iovine to see what the holdup was. (Soon after, Robinson says, she amicably ended her association with both Dre and Interscope.)

This same strength of will allowed Barbara Robinson, several years after her divorce from Dawn's dad, to pack up her two young daughters and head to the Bay Area. In California, Dawn soon began to think that the singing that had earned her so many praises in church could also be a way for her to make a dollar. In time the talented high-school student was landing gigs on San Francisco's gay-club circuit. Sometimes another young local talent would sit in with her band. His name: Raphael Saadiq.

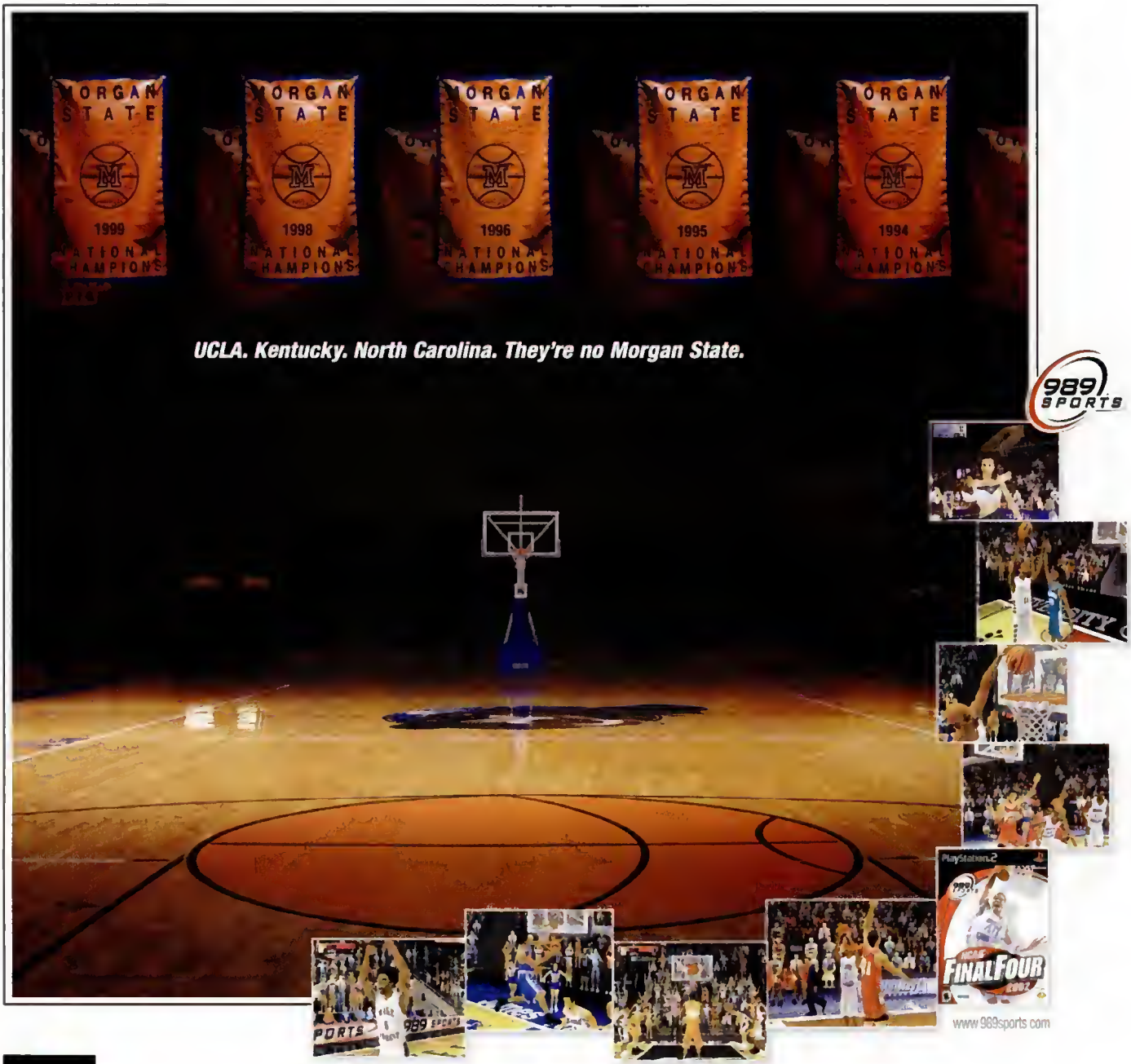
Because of their long personal history, it was a no-brainer for Robinson to accept Saadiq's invitation some 17 years later to join him and former A Tribe Called Quest DJ Ali Shaheed Muhammad in the group that would come to be known as Lucy Pearl.

Things worked well at first. En Vogue had been tightly controlled by producers Thomas McElroy and Denzil Foster, but Lucy Pearl was a looser organization, allowing Robinson to write songs and have a say



BRICK HOUSE: "I don't care about the barriers against me. I have a destiny"

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ISABEL SNYDER FOR ART MIX THE ADENCY; STYLING BY LAURA DUNCAN/ART MIX THE AGENCY; MAKEUP BY ERIN AYANI/CLOUTIER; HAIR BY DANIEL HOWELL/MAGNET. (PREVIOUS SPREAD) PINK FUR JACKET BY RICHARD TYLER; PRINT LACE BRA BY ADENT PROVOCATEUR; SILVER FAND RING BY MICHAEL SCHMIDT; SILVER DAGGER NECKLACE BY ERICA ANENBERG. (THIS PAGE) GRAY ZIP-FRONT JACKET BY RICHARD TYLER; BLUE DENIM PANT BY ALICIA LAWHON; BLUE HAT BY FISHNET; SILVER SKULL RING BY MICHAEL SCHMIDT



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in the production booth. But this freedom came with a price.

To begin with, there was strife with Saadiq and Muhammad—mostly, says Robinson, because she's from Venus and they're from Mars. During one photo shoot, for which she was taking hours to prepare, Saadiq (who declined to be interviewed for this story) reportedly asked her, "It really takes that long to do your hair?" Robinson replied, "Raphael, it takes a woman three or four hours to get ready for a date at the movies, let alone a photo shoot."



GOOD TIMES: En Vogue strikes e pose in 1992

Financial problems dogged her as well. She agreed to a small advance when the group started recording in May 1999 because of the artistic opportunities that the project offered. But as the studio sessions stretched into the winter, Robinson reached out to Saadiq (who also owned the group's label, Pookie Records) for more money. "By December, I was like, Okay, Raphael, I can't even buy Christmas gifts for my family or pay my bills," says Robinson. "And he told my manager that it was every *man* for himself."

By August, with little prospect of a real payday, Robinson felt she'd had enough; she gave notice as of October 31. What she couldn't have known then was that Saadiq and Muhammad would soon replace her with raspy-voiced Joi Gilliam-Gipp. To make matters worse, Saadiq appeared on BET's *106 & Park* saying that Joi "should've been the first girl" in the group.

Saadiq's statement shocked even Muhammad, who was on the show with him. "I didn't know he was going to say that," he says. "I disagree, but he's his own man." (Muhammad is no longer with Lucy Pearl either; asked why he left, he would say only, "I'm a businessman.")

Robinson took these developments hard. "There were a lot of tears," her boyfriend confirms. She couldn't get a handle on why the end of her relationship with Lucy Pearl so painfully echoed the circumstances that led to her departure from En Vogue in 1997, with former friends quarreling about money and the whole thing dissolving in mistrust.

Robinson vividly remembers her turning point with En Vogue, when she finally got fed up with being broke. It wasn't the fact that she was still driving a Ford Fiesta with an oil leak, while Foster treated himself to a new Porsche every year. And it wasn't because things had gotten so bad for another member, Robinson says, that she had had to talk her out of applying for unemployment. Rather, it was when her ailing grandmother was rushed to a hospital for emergency treatment, but had to be airlifted to another facility because she lacked insurance and couldn't afford to stay. "She ended up dying, and that broke me," says Robinson, her voice flush with anger and pain. "She died with nothing; I couldn't help her in any way."

En Vogue's money troubles resulted from the group's initial production deal with Foster and McElroy, who contracted their services to a record label, first EastWest Records and later Elektra Entertainment Group, both headed by Sylvia Rhone. Before En Vogue got paid, the producers and the label got a cut. Plus, recoupable expenses for things like studio time, videos, and hair and makeup were deducted from the group's earnings. The remainder was then split four ways, leaving each member with very little.

Things were looking up for the group when they began recording *EV3*, because they'd finally gotten out of their stringent contract with Foster and McElroy. But during a meeting about the album's forthcoming release, the group imploded.

The members of En Vogue differ on what exactly went down that day. But all agree that Elektra label head Rhone asked each member for a two-year commitment to the project. Robinson felt unable to do that because she'd already signed her deal with Interscope. And she felt betrayed by the other women in En Vogue. "They gave me an ultimatum: our way or get out," says Robinson. "And that hurt me. We were sisters."

Cindy Heron-Braggs, who was the sunny cheerleader of the foursome, sympathizes with Robinson. "Dawn couldn't commit for two years," she says. "So in essence, she felt like we were firing her." But Maxine Jones and Terry Ellis see it otherwise. They claim that Robinson wanted to get out of the group anyway and was simply using Rhone's two-year clause as an excuse. "Dawn keeps saying she had no way out," says Ellis. "And that's just not the truth. Dawn said, 'I've given eight years to this group, and I'm not doing it anymore. It's about me.' Those were her words." Adds Jones, "Dawn can be in denial sometimes. She wanted to be a solo artist, and that's all there is to it."

Robinson also believes Rhone was instrumental in booting her from En Vogue and undermining her career by telling other labels not to sign her. But the record exec disputes the claims. "I'm really sorry that she feels that way about Elektra or about me," says Rhone. "Elektra has never interfered with En Vogue or Dawn's solo projects. And I, personally, have only wished her the best."

"DAWN CAN BE IN DENIAL SOMETIMES. SHE WANTED TO BE A SOLO ARTIST. THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT."

EV3 was released in June 1997 with Dawn's lead vocals removed. And the Dawn-less set proceeded to fall from the charts faster than you could sing "Mmm-bop." Dawn thought, *I told you so.* "When their album didn't do well, I was like, Ha ha ha," says Dawn. "But at the same time, I was like, That's not good. Because I wanted them to be successful."

It's not that she's obsessing over the past. But the old battles still rankle. "I'm trying to figure this out," she says, likening her experiences in the industry to being "raped over and over again." You need to be strong to survive, she says. "If you believe in yourself, you will absolutely make it. It's a divine plan that nobody can take away. I will make it."

She may be onto something. In addition to her abundant talent and resurgent hope, she now has the gods smiling on her. Or at least the fortune-cookie gods. Finishing lunch at the Chinese restaurant in West Oakland, she cracks her cookie open and reads: "You will be unusually successful in business."

Now it's Dawn's turn to smile. V

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HYPNOTIZED

Five years after the murder of The Notorious B.I.G., we still mourn the world's finest MC. By Karen R. Good

My brother Preach is a Gemini, which means he's a limit pusher, a trickster, wonderfully clever, irrationally volatile, multitalented, ultramagnetic, and so on. In his younger, more excitable days, I would always tell him that the most beautiful thing about Geminis is that they really aren't scared—a little cuckoo from time to time, but damn sure not scared. I would also tell him that Geminis, because of their *cojones*, must be careful not to fuck up and die.

Christopher Wallace (Biggie!) was also a Gemini. He manifested gorgeous, graven images on his debut album, *Ready To Die*. With that title, the author of some of the most precise cinematic narratives of the 20th century didn't just call on Death, he tangled with the strong old man as if he were a mere mortal; cheated him more than twice. But he eventually made word life (which in this case meant death), and so fans must hear again and again the necessary but obvious statement that Biggie died because he claimed death.

So we learn that, yes, ye are gods. But in saying "I'm ready to die," Biggie (and his brother Tupac) was really saying that he was *ready to live!* He was no longer afraid to die; in fact, he was *willing*. What was he willing to die for? That's the great paradox of our time. Money? Freedom? His woman? All that and "Shit, my momma got cancer in her breast / Don't ask me why I'm motherfuckin' stressed" from "Things Done Changed." More than being "black and ugly as ever," more than being a slinger of megablasts, young Biggie (we must remember he was young) was an intellectual who understood that the tools that built this nation were money, power, and the whip. He also knew that he didn't have any of these—at least not that he could see.

The reckoning with and acceptance of the inevitable are necessary for human evolution. Biggie probably was scared, but then, like most sages, he confronted the thing he was most afraid of. Biggie shooting himself in the head at the end of *Ready To Die* was dramatic; that's not to say he did not consider suicide, but he would never have greeted death so easily. And he didn't. The posthumous release of his second album, *Life After Death*, exemplified his willingness to rise above the bullshit. He collaborated with everyone from Bone Thugs-N-Harmony to R. Kelly, and transcended the coastal foolishness by going back to Cali.

And so we have the LAPD's blue wall of silence regarding Biggie's assassination, which further proves this nation's historical disregard for and fear of black life. Understand that, and you understand uprising: why black genius is coveted, why hip hop is rebellion, and why Tupac had to shoot those cops that night.

The peaceful Mahatma Gandhi said, "Man has but to do or die." Bed-Stuy's mantra is "Do or Die." But how you gon' wrestle with a gator and not get muddy? Biggie fought the good fight.

Illustration by MATT MAHURIN



THE ART OF NOISE

Ska-revival band turned pop sensation No Doubt had dabbled in black music before. But with *Rock Steady*, the group took some artistic chances and really got their groove on.

By Mimi Valdés. Photograph by Joseph Cultice



ADULT SWIM: (Clockwise from top left) Gwen Stefani, Tom Dumont, Tony Kanal, and Adrian Young

Teenagers have a way of stereotyping themselves, in music as much as anything else. There's the bougie girl who digs R&B, the thug kid with his hard-core rap, the pierce-tongued Goth who's into heavy metal. They often view genre shifting as betrayal rather than musical experimentation or evolution. As these folks blossom, more than likely they'll expand their horizons.

On their latest album, *Rock Steady*, No Doubt seem to be going through a similar process, widening their influences to include both hip hop and dancehall. The group first started catching attention in '95 with the hits "Just a Girl" and "Don't Speak" off their 7.7-million-selling ska/punk breakout, *Tragic Kingdom*. But if you were up on No Doubt, seeing lead singer Gwen Stefani in a rap video last year (Eve's "Let Me Blow Ya Mind") didn't surprise you: This is a group that asked Hype Williams to direct their clip for "Ex-Girlfriend," the first single from 2000's *Return of Saturn*.

Some hip hop fans definitely wondered who the blond chick was in Eve's video; others recognized that it was Stefani, and admired her, but were a little disappointed by the collaboration. "It should have been more Gwen, less 'R&B chick' who referenced the vocals," says veteran hip hop DJ and No Doubt fan Stretch Armstrong. "The way Dre used her voice on the hook, it could have been anyone." It wasn't until Armstrong saw the chemistry between Eve and Stefani in the video that the song came alive for him. Eve says the compatibility was real. "Gwen and I had an instant connection both artistically and spiritually," she says. "We could have been sisters in another life."

Talking to Stefani, 32, it's easy to see why Eve feels that way. Gwen is the kind of girl anyone would love to hang out with. She's got an amazingly cool vibe that transcends her tastemaking fashion sense and crowd-pleasing voice. And she has a spirit of adventure—a willingness to just go places and try things—that is rare among stars of her magnitude.

When No Doubt formed in 1987, they were practitioners of the hiccuping rhythms of ska-revival, which traces its roots back to Jamaican rhythms via British punk. Fifteen years later, the music and culture of the lush Caribbean island still inspire the band, especially bassist Tony Kanal, 31, who vacationed there in 2000. He chilled in Kingston, swam in waterfalls, climbed the Blue Mountains, and even held hands with friends under a full moon. "It was all stuff I'd never done in my life. It was such an amazing experience," he says.

Kanal convinced the band to head down to Yard to do some of the recording for *Rock Steady*. They fell in love with dancehall's sexy, hard-edged groove, which Kanal turned them on to at impromptu backstage parties. Some of the island's legendary musicians—Bounty Killer, Steely & Clevie, Lady Saw, and Sly & Robbie—ended up contributing to the album.

The sessions in Jamaica are one of many strands woven together on the new album. During No Doubt's nationwide tour in 2000 to support *Return of Saturn*, they left their hotel rooms and started going out to clubs—something they hadn't done much of before, but continued to do during the months of songwriting for *Rock Steady*. They soon found they wanted to create music as relevant as the hip hop in heavy rotation at these parties. "Every once in a while, they would throw on one of our songs, but it didn't sound quite as good on the dance floor," says guitarist Tom Dumont, 34. Adds Kanal, "I thought, Fuck, if we're going dancing all the time, let's hear our *own* records."

Kanal was the first in the group to embrace hip hop, even forcing Stefani to listen to N.W.A in his car during their much publicized romance 10 years ago. She now says she misses the days when lyrics were more pure. "Rappers were really writing about their lives. That's what made it so intense. It's starting to get saturated, with copies of copies coming out—talking about how much money they're making, girls. Hmmm, *that's* interesting. Why don't you write a song about how many girls you hired to be in your video?" she asks, chuckling with sarcasm.

Nevertheless, the group admires the genre's musical progression. "In the last three to four years, hip hop has been so creative, inventive, and fresh-sounding compared to rock. It has definitely been an



STYLE MAVEN: Stefani wails her heart out at the My VH1 Awards in L.A. in 2001

MICHAEL CAULFIELD/WIREIMAGE

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inspiration," Stefani says. "The older you get, the more different stuff appeals," adds Dumont. "It's easier to drop the thing you had when you were the teenage rocker dude with long hair—the social context of your music. You just don't care anymore."

And yet some No Doubt partisans haven't been too receptive to the band's wanderings on *Rock Steady*. The band's Web site logged more than a few complaints about the first single, "Hey Baby," in the first days after its release. And the track drew angry phone calls to Southern California's leading rock radio station, KROQ, on which No Doubt was weaned while growing up in Orange County. The album's more rockish "Don't Let Me Down," coproduced by ex-Car Ric Ocasek, was soon substituted on the station's playlist.



DYNAMIC DUO: Stefani and Eve dressed to impress at the 2001 BET Awards in Las Vegas

True fans of the group shouldn't worry so much. Bands change, okay? Get over it. No Doubt didn't sacrifice their integrity; they just spread their wings. And that meant reaching out to an array of artists and producers, among them Prince, the Neptunes, Dr. Dre, Timbaland, and Britain's Mark "Spike" Stent, William Orbit, and Nellee Hooper. The results are a mixed bag, but No Doubt has chosen to look at the positive side. "I think we learned loads from all these different, amazingly talented people," Stefani says.

No Doubt immediately applied some of what they learned in the recording booth. For years, they had created their songs by jamming in the garage with a tape recorder and then handing the cassette to a producer. Now they began to record themselves on Pro Tools and put some of the raw material on the final CD. "We did more on these songs than we've ever done, 'cause the preproduction stuff was actually used," says Stefani. Kanal agrees: "Using the computer to record was a cool way to keep all the original ideas intact."

Working with the Neptunes was an especially enticing prospect. "The idea was to see what would happen," says Stefani. "It was two different worlds that mutually respect each other coming together to do something new and fresh."

Unfortunately, their ideas didn't quite gel in the studio. "Working with the Neptunes was really hard and awkward," she admits. The producers were more accustomed to simply laying down a track for a solo artist to rap or sing over, rather than working with a band. And No Doubt felt intimidated because they rarely wrote songs with people outside the group. "Songwriting is such an intimate thing, and with people you don't normally write with, you're naked," says Kanal. Even the extroverted Stefani was nervous. "Like, yeah, let me sing a little thing off the top of my head for you. Ooooh, it's horrible!" she says. According to the Neptunes' Chad "Chase" Hugo, "They weren't used to our methods, so it was strange at first. But it was all good."

The fruit of No Doubt's uneasy pairing with the Neptunes was "Hella Good," a track that still needed tweaking after they finished. "We knew it wasn't quite right, but we weren't sure how to make the song work," says drummer Adrian Young, 32. Nellee Hooper patched it up with them in London. "He's the one who got excited about it," says Young. "He had the idea of coming up with this overdriven synthesizer riff. He brought excitement and fun to it."

"Hella Good" did eventually make it on the album. No Doubt's attempt to work with Dr. Dre, however, fell short of their hopes. After receiving a CD of his instrumental tracks, they found one they liked, looped the beat, and played around with it—and that's about where it ended. "We never went into the studio with Dre. He kept being busy," says Dumont. "We went in with this guy named Scott Storch, one of Dre's guys, I guess."

They were basically done with the album when coproducer and mixer Spike Stent suggested they go in the studio with Timbaland. "We were like, We'd love to, it would be an honor," says Kanal. "But again," adds Stefani, "it was hard to go in the studio with someone new, so we really had to push ourselves." The experience turned out fine, but Timbaland's track didn't feel finished. No Doubt decided not to force it and just go with the songs that were completed. *Rock Steady* was the first album they had ever finished in less than a year. And the Timbaland effort is, Stefani points out, "another bitchin' track that will get used someday."

"SONGWRITING IS INTIMATE, AND WITH PEOPLE YOU DON'T NORMALLY WRITE WITH, YOU'RE NAKED."

You gotta love the band for not including songs produced by hip hop's most celebrated producers just because it's trendy. And they will go back and make those songs work. For their last album, No Doubt did a tune with Prince and shelved it, hoping to complete it later. The haunting result, "Waiting Room," now appears on *Rock Steady*. "It's definitely us doing a song by Prince who's doing a song by No Doubt," says Dumont.

One of the biggest challenges for any mainstream artist is balancing creativity and popularity. It's easy to focus obsessively on what the musical climate demands, but that route limits inspiration and blocks your own growth. "If you're a true artist, you make the music for yourself first," says Stefani. "You can't try to please even your biggest fans. *That* would be selling out, 'cause you're just trying to make sure they still love you."

Though *Rock Steady*'s experimentation with new genres was largely guided by their own tastes and instincts, No Doubt still hopes the rest of the world appreciates their gift. And as long as you're down for evolution, it's a gift that keeps on giving.

PAUL SMITH/FEATURE FLASH/RETNA

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HOW HIGH

Harlem's G. Dep is trying to take the spotlight off his personal problems and shine it on his critically acclaimed new album, *Child of the Ghetto*. By Benjamin Meadows-Ingram

Nobody gives a fuck about you when you're out in the street doing nothing, but as soon as you get on, niggas is like, 'Oh, what is *he* doing?'" says G. Dep, visibly upset about the rumors of his alleged abuse of angel dust. Cruising his native Harlem in a dark blue Jeep Cherokee, he continues, "But I'm just living. I might've mixed some leek [PCP] with some weed, but I'm looking at it like I'm just doing me."

Frustrated, 27-year-old Dep, born Trevell Coleman, fires a cloud of mentholated smoke into the chill night air. To the uptown clocker turned smash-single spitter, drug use, even of a so-called hard drug like angel dust, simply comes with the territory. "I've been running in the streets since '91, and in the street you fuck with everything," he says. The way Sean Combs sees it, that realism is part of Dep's appeal. "He represents the problems of the black man in America," says Combs. "Dep reminds me that grown men are standing on the block because there are no jobs. And they're doing drugs just to have something to do, because things are so bad out there."

As the Jeep finds its way past blocks of run-down bodegas and nickel-and-dime drug dealers, G. Dep (short for Ghetto Dependent) adds link after link to his endless chain of Newports, and describes the struggles that led to his drug use—such as the time three years ago when, unable to afford train fare, he walked 25 blocks home from the hospital in the dead of winter after watching his daughter's birth. "You hate where you come from sometimes, and that's where the drugs come in—just trying to escape reality," he says.

But once he got down with Bad Boy in '98, and the Harlem-shaking "Let's Get It" began dominating the airwaves last spring, Dep's drug use was no longer acceptable to his label. "That shit just got blown all out of proportion," Dep says in his own defense. "Puff and I hollered about it. He came to me like, 'Dog, if you got a problem, maybe you ought to go to rehab,' and I respected his criticism. But I told him I didn't need to go because it wasn't that serious.

"All I had to do was get myself together," Dep says confidently. "I just chilled on everything and got on some straight-up workout shit." The small-framed MC (5'8" and 165 pounds) says he even went back to jogging in the morning, a habit he picked up while serving time at an upstate boot camp in 1997 for cocaine possession and sales. "I ain't gonna front like I was running marathons every morning," Dep jokes of his self-initiated rehabilitation. "I was just getting my wind right."

Now Dep is concentrating on leaving the drug associations behind and moving units of his overlooked solo debut. *Child of the Ghetto* bucks materialistic East Coast clichés with raps like, "I'm walking in the rain / Wishing things would change / It ain't a game, man / I pawned all the rings and chains," on "Everyday." Yet, this well-crafted CD moved only 24,000 units its first week, and sat at 69,000 units at press time. "Niggas criticize the album now. But when everybody gets over examining it, niggas gonna be like, 'Put that Dep shit on,'" says Dep.

It doesn't help that two of G. Dep's strongest songs, "Let's Get It" and "Child of the Ghetto," originally slated to go on his debut, were bumped onto the boss's blockbuster project—P. Diddy's *Bad Boy Family...The Saga Continues*. Despite being stranded with a second-rate single to champion his own CD, Dep refuses to blame Sean Combs. "It was smart to put my songs on *The Saga Continues*, 'cause it got my name out," he says. "It just ain't work out how niggas planned it. Now I just gotta work, 'cause what else am I gonna do? Sit here and give up? Hell, no!"

And what about the suspected drug problems? "Fuck a dust blunt," he says before stepping out of the Jeep and onto 116th and Lenox. "That shit ain't waking me up in the morning. I've gotten to the point where I know, if anything is gonna fuck up my career, then I can't even deal with it." Spoken like a true hustler.



Photograph by **KAREEM BLACK**

CARNIVAL OVER HERE



Carnival in Trinidad is the party of a lifetime. OJ Lima puts on his dancing shoes and joins the parade. Photographs by Sarah A. Friedman





The Caribbean is the home of many wonders—the music of Jamaica, the rum of Barbados, the cigars of Cuba, the white sand beaches of Aruba. But the region's best-kept secret is the celebration of Carnival in Port of Spain, the capital city of Trinidad and Tobago. Even though more than 50,000 people attend the celebration every year, it is overshadowed by its spiritual cousins: Rio de Janeiro's festival of the same name and New Orleans' Mardi Gras.

It was in the late 18th century that French settlers and their slaves first partied and paraded to celebrate the arrival of Lent—the solemn, 40-day period of atonement that commences on Ash Wednesday and prepares worshippers for the joyous celebration of Jesus' rebirth on Easter Sunday. The religious significance of the festival has diminished in modern times, taking a backseat to the culture and spirit of the nation, independent since 1962. The elaborate, colorful costumes are derived from West African folk tricksters, caricatures of colonial farmers, Biblical creatures, and a smattering of Native American and Hindu characters.

Trinidad's large Indian population has also made its presence felt in the island's cuisine. Paraders and spectators alike are invigorated by flavorful fruit chutneys and spicy curry sauces that dot the inside of rotis and fish sandwiches, which can be purchased at any roadside stand.

But what would a West Indian celebration be without music? Most noticeable are the sound systems pumping nonstop soca. Powered by enormous speakers sitting atop flatbed trucks, the sexually charged tunes fuel revelers to wind and roll against one another for days on end. Then there are the joyous harmonies of the steel bands. Like small orchestras, they play original instrumentals as well as their renditions of modern pop classics like the Police's "Every Breath You Take."

"We don't fete often, but when we do, we go to the extreme," says Tony Beaubrun, a 66-year-old retired businessman who has been hosting an annual backyard party since 1975. "I originally invited 105 people, and 600 showed up!"

Carnival isn't like celebrating a birthday, a new job, or even a national holiday. There is a greater sense of cultural pride and togetherness. There are so many aspects to it: dancing at the annual Island People's Insomnia concert; slinging paint at J'Ouvert, the opening march of the festival; parading in costume for Nite Mas. The fun never ends—right up until the clock strikes midnight on Ash Wednesday. But even that's not so disappointing, because there's always next year.



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MODERN LOVE

As the world turns, fashion designers respond with clothing that is romantic, young, sexy, simple, and—reflecting globalization—culturally eclectic. Today, style is about individuality.
Photographs by Daniel Gabbay. Styling by Emil Wilbekin



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WILD, WILD WEST: Pink silk dress by **Christian Dior;** blue topaz ring by **Dale Novick Ltd.** Black perforated vest by **Costume National Homme;** blue denim jeans by **Levi's;** black leather cap by **Tom Ford for Gucci;** stainless steel watch by **Tag Heuer**



HIPPIE DELUXE:
(This page) Green, brown, and white chiffon dress and jeans, both by **Just Cavalli;** suede sash belt by **Iceberg;** chocolate woven leather round fringed bag by **Bottega Veneta;** gold multistrand necklace by **Dolce & Gabbana;** brown wood cuff with stone detail by **Mark Davis**

(Opposite page) Nude silk chiffon keyhole dress with cape by **Kenneth Cole;** gold multichain hoop earrings and "Coco" necklace, all by **Chanel**

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BOOGIE NIGHTS:
(This page) Black silk hole-knit V-neck top and caffe silk chiffon crochet shredded skirt by **Tom Ford for Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche;** black mesh bra by **Calvin Klein Underwear;** gold hoop earring by **Nine West Jewelry;** white cuff by **Alex & Ani;** bone leather corset clutch by **Jennifer Scott for Apropo**

(Opposite page) Pink chiffon dress and multicolored ribbon belt, both by **Dolce & Gabbana;** diamond and tanzanite Sabi ring by **Henry Dunay;** Jaipur necklace (worn as anklet) by **H.Stern.** Ice silk monogrammed robe and boxers, both by **Sean John;** silver necklace with cross pendant by **Costume National Homme;** stainless steel watch by **ESQ**





URBAN RENEWAL: White eyelet-embroidered dress by **Alexander McQueen.** Black mesh T-shirt by **Dolce & Gabbana Intimo;** gray leather drawstring pant by **Dolce & Gabbana;** black woven leather cuff by **Bottega Veneta.** Ride: 2002 Thunderbird by Ford



NEW AMERICANS: White chiffon obi-top dress by **Tom Ford for Gucci;** diamond bracelet and ruby ring, both by **Ella Gafter for Ellagem;** black leather sandals by **Manolo Blahnik;** black leather wrist-strap wallet with sterling band by **Helmut Lang.** Dark blue cashmere suit by **Helmut Lang;** red mesh T-shirt by **Tommy Jeans;** white canvas belt by **Kenneth Cole;** black leather shoes by **Costume National Homme;** rhinestone necklace by **Chanel.** SEE THE DETAILS

BEAUTY NOTES: All makeup by Cover Girl: Opal Dust Professional Eye Enhancers eye shadow, Sheer Shiver EyeSlicks Gel EyeColor eye shadow, Natural Twinkle Cheekers blush, Spring Violet CG Smoothers lip liner, and Rose Liquid Lipsticks lip gloss





V STYLE

On New York City's Lower East Side, it's one unified nation under a groove. **Photographs by Phil Knott. Styling by Angela Arambulo**

BORN IN THE USA





(Opposite page, from left) Black hooded pullover and pant, both by **Fubu;** red and black headbands, both by **Rocawear.** Red and white terry-cloth tube top and red and blue knit shorts, both by **Ecko Red;** gold hoop earrings with logo by **Chanel**
(This page, from left) Gray nylon hooded jacket and pant, both by **Triple 5 Soul;** red visor by **Rocaweer;** black fingerless glove by **Marc Ecko.** White leather motorcycle jacket by **Versus;** white denim skirt by **J.Lo;** white sneakers by **Puma**

MAKEUP BY CAROLINA GONZALEZ FOR AVEDA/INDEPENDENT; HAIR BY FREDERICK PARNELL/PRIMP CLUB. ALL BIKES PROVIDED BY PHAT CYCLES









(This page, top left) Tan button-front shirt, white T-shirt, and camouflage nylon vest, all by **Tommy Jeans.** (Top right) Polka-dot dolman-sleeve top and blue denim shorts, both by **Diesel;** black wristbands, both by **Rocawear;** oval green beryl ring by **Slane & Slane;** gold hoop earrings with logo by **Chanel.** (Bottom left) Gray sleeveless hooded pullover and pant, both by **Mecca;** white long-sleeve shirt by **Nautica Jeans Co.;** black messenger bag by **Triple 5 Soul;** black fingerless glove by **Reebok;** white and black headbands, both by **Nike.** (Bottom right) Blue velour zip-front jacket, gray cotton T-shirt, and hat, all by **Akademiks;** white skully by **Rocawear;** MP3 headphones by **Samsung** (Opposite page, from left) Black mesh tank top and hot pants, both by **DKNY;** red bra by **Victoria's Secret;** gold hoop earrings and belt with logo, both by **Chanel;** red armband by **Nike.** White scoop-neck shirt and miniskirt, both by **D&G;** white armband by **Rocawear;** gold chain belt by **Chanel;** gold bamboo earrings by **Jason's Jewelry**


de
Deux
COCO





(Opposite page, from left) Red sleeveless top and shorts, both by **Rocawear.** Blue denim and suede shirt and shorts, both by **Davoucci;** gray waffle-knit shirt by **Armani Jeans** (This page) Yellow and white nylon zip-front jacket, gray pant, visor, and white sneakers, all by **Prada;** white sleeveless shirt by **Calvin Klein.** SEE THE DETAILS



If you're an all-natural kind of girl and you dare to be rare, then the "Gumby" is sure to turn heads. Grace Jones isn't the only one who can take this style to greater heights. To keep your peak in place and in shape, try Bumble & bumble's Holding Spray

BEAUTY NOTES:
All makeup by Revlon: Va Va Va Bloom Illuminance Creme Shadow eye shadow and Blush Chrome Chrome Velvet lipstick

STYLING BY COLLEEN BRENNAN. MAKEUP BY ANA MARIE KRAMER & KRAMER. HAIR BY CHUCK AMOS FOR BUMBLE & BUMBLE/JUMP. FLUORESCENT GREEN CAP-SLEEVE DRESS BY JEAN PAUL GAULTIER. GOLD BOW AND HEART EARRINGS BY CHANEL

V FACE

SOFT GEOMETRY

Asymmetric cuts are back. By Tasha Turner. Photographs by Dana Menussi

For hip hop, it all came together in the '80s. R&B came alive while disco died and punk was fading. Artists like Patti LaBelle, Bobby Brown, and Salt-N-Pepa were also starting to make headway with angled hairstyles. Asymmetric cuts have now come full circle, and these sharp "designer" cuts are being spotted on everyone from Mary J. Blige to Missy Elliott. "The asymmetric look started a few years back with fashion, and now it's moved on up to our hair," says hairstylist Chuck Amos, who sculpted these angled styles for VIBE's beauty pages.

So who's donning this new look? People who want to show off their more creative side, who know that cutting-edge hairstyles can make a statement louder than any words can speak. "Women are more outward," says Amos. "Today's haircuts are more street, hobo, and do-it-yourself, as opposed to the glamour of what Vidal Sassoon did in the '80s and the Asian bobs of the late '80s." With his precise mix of color and hair extensions, and his creative vision, Amos inspires us to embrace the new with these one-sided 'do's.



Given the right chorus of color and a stylist who can cut with absolute precision, anyone can pull off this daring 'do. Shine is what you need to finish the look. A dab of Paul Mitchell's Gloss Drops will definitely do the trick

BEAUTY NOTES:
All makeup by L'Oréal. Cool Sorbet Eye Cooler eye shadows; Black mascara; Pink Pair lipliner; blush duo; and Mambo Tomorrow lipgloss. Nails: Pedi-to-order.



This asymmetric cut is one we will always remember. Think Queen Latifah and MC Lyte. Straight or wavy, it doesn't matter, because this look is a classic. Frizz Ease Relax Ripple Effect by John Frieda will keep these curls alive

BEAUTY NOTES:
All makeup by Urban Decay: Midnight Cowgirl eye shadow, Asphyxia Pleather lip pencil, and Carney XXX Shine lip gloss



Everything about this slanted bob screams confidance. With a touch of color at the tips, it's you who will set the tone. To reinvent yourself day or night, try Clairol's Jazzing Hair Color in any of their 18 shades

BEAUTY NOTES:
All makeup by Chanel: Aqua Basic Eye Colour eye shadow, Teak Precision Eye Definer, Fantasia Powder Blush, and Tango Creme Lipstick

(OPPOSITE PAGE) PINK: BLACK, AND WHITE STRIPED HALTER BY CHANEL; BLACK HOOP EARRINGS BY MICHAEL & HUSH. (THIS PAGE) BLACK MESH ONE-SLEEVE TOP WITH RIBBON BY D&G; PEACOCK BROOCH BY MICHAEL & HUSH. SEE THE DETAILS

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revolutions



Q-TIP
KAMAAL THE ABSTRACT
ARISTA

●●●

BY KAREN R. GOOD

Call him Kamaal, 'kay? He chose his Muslim name eight years ago, and though he'll always be "Q-Tip" to folks grown enough to remember being led by journeymen A Tribe Called Quest and

Illustration by **DAVID COWLES**

their Native Tongue brethren, try to remember the man is, like, 31. He is not a Q-Tip anymore.

Amplified, from 1999, was Kamaal's first brave, if awkward, step toward independence from an increasingly frustrated ATCQ, whose final three albums (*Beats, Rhymes and Life*, *The Love Movement*, and *Anthology*) could never eclipse the innovation of their golden years (*Peoples Instinctive Travels in the Paths of Rhythm*, *The Low End Theory*, and *Midnight Marauders*). Clearly for Tribe, the bridge was over. *Amplified* was a much needed departure and natural progression for the enigmatic Q-Tip, but with the exception of a few *vivrant* tracks, the album was widely considered lackluster. Okay, wack. Folks sensed commercial compromise and, because they love and respect the artist, told him so. Moody and elusive, Q-Tip didn't want to talk to anybody anymore about any damn thing. In the past five years, Jonathan Davis-aka-Q-Tip-aka-Kamaal Fareed has been tried in the fire and come out as pure gold.

Kamaal the Abstract isn't as good as it could have been, but it's not *Amplified*, which was distractingly self-conscious. *Kamaal* is closer to the rooted, love-sexy album we, the people, expect from the musicologist. It is at times a bit self-indulgent (some of the songs go on and on and on), but sometimes that's what's called for. This Hendrix disciple has always been his own man, and here he is more confident in his explorations of his music and his self, herkening back to the innovation and bold experimentation of Native Tongues. First of all, with the help of beautiful background vocalists, Kamaal is *singing*. All day. Moreover, he's listening: You hear that ring-shout and soul-clap that holds the bottom of "Barely in Love"? Depending on ear and sensibility, that's informed by the Beatles, Prince, or maybe the McIntosh County Shouters of coastal Georgia.

The spare, piano-driven "Blue Girl" is sexy and personal in that way Tip (oops) has always been sensitive to women, even female-identified ("Bonita Applebum"). His thought has a nice curve to it, which is kind of his game. Not complaining. Kamaal sings, "All you gotta do to soothe your pain / Close your sparkling eyes and chant your name." Now he might yell at Blue Girl in the end ("Claimin' you got brains in your head / Then why you got that pain in your head?"), but the song is otherwise so nice you don't really care. "Heela" furthers his somewhat feminist perspective; the rock-inflected hip hop song—an ode to the woman and the indomitable shoe—is smart and driving; less sexist than stylish. "Plan on changing the world just like me / You can be the chairwoman, I'll be the trustee. . . ."

Kamaal just straight rhymes on "Abstractionisms," featuring a nice Kenny Garrett tenor saxophone solo. On "Feelin'," he says, "So this profiling cop with his profiling ass / Figured the best thing he could do was find a cat to harass / The little kitten was me, not the one in the tree / The black one with the promise and the wish to be free. . . ." But soon you're back to the pretty ditties like "Caring," a soulful operatic lullaby in which Kamaal sweetly reminds: Somebody loves you.

ratings

A MASTERPIECE ●●●●●
EXCEPTIONAL ●●●●
SOLID ●●●
WEAK ●●
WACK ●

Kamaal, entirely self-produced, is a progression for, uh, Kamaal. Songs are allowed to breathe, as on his power jam "Do U Dig U?" (featuring flutist Gary Thomas and Kirk Rosenwinkle on rhythm guitar), which rocks on for seven wonderful minutes and asks the *only* question. And for Kamaal, that's exactly the point.

N.E.R.D
IN SEARCH OF...
VIRGIN
●●●◐

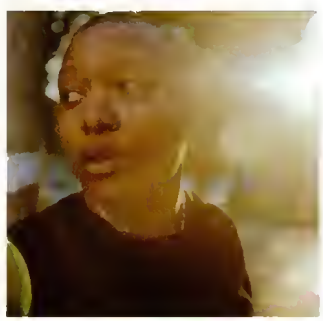

(From left) Chad Hugo, Pharrell Williams, and Shay

If at first you don't succeed, dust yourself off and try again. Unsatisfied with the earlier version of *In Search Of...*, N.E.R.D (aka the Neptunes' Pharrell Williams and Chad "Chase" Hugo, plus singer Shay) went back to the lab and added rockin' live instrumentation to their debut. The results are unlike anything previously heard from the ubiquitous Virginia duo.

While the Neptunes keep things jiggling, baby, on the ass-shaking "Lapdance" and the oddly fixated "Brain," elsewhere they eschew the synthesizer slabs that propelled their ascent up the hip hop–production ranks. This departure reveals an unexpected musical sophistication and emotional sensitivity.

In Search Of... unfolds like an experimental jam session that got recorded by accident. Luscious automated strings and acoustic guitars drive the bluesy "Bobby James," about a homeless teenager. Warm harmonies abound on "Run to the Sun," where Williams wonders longingly about lost love. But the Neptunes' musical makeover is most evident on "Provider," a ballad about a vulnerable cocaine trafficker that brims with rockabilly influences. It's a complete departure, but with aural candy this flavorful, who cares? *Matt Conaway*

MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO
COOKIE: THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MIX TAPE
MAVERICK
●●●●



Meshell Ndegeocello's fourth album, *Cookie: The Anthropological Mix Tape*, is an unapologetic blend of sociopolitical commentary and sex talk. Since her 1993 debut, *Plantation Lullabies*, whose sassy single "If That's Your Boyfriend (He Wasn't Last Night)" was a modest hit, her music has become more intense, multilayered, and honest. Yet, simultaneously, she has faded from the pop-culture radar.

Cookie will do little to get her airplay on BET, but it will speak volumes to those who marvel at Ndegeocello's uncompromising vision. It's a collage of treatises on relationships, consumerism, and other substantive matters. On the incendiary "Hot Night," the singer/songwriter/bassist intersperses Angela Davis sound bites with a politically insightful verse by Talib Kweli. In "Priorities 1-6," Ndegeocello has crafted a love song devoid of ego. Her husky, sensual voice aches with vulnerability on the hook: "I just wanna talk and get to know you / Before I touch you and learn to love you." "Earth" displays Ndegeocello's musical gifts: Its two distinct, richly textured musical movements are knitted from a strong bass line with subtle percussive accents woven throughout. Rich in lyrical and sonic brilliance, *Cookie* provides plenty to stimulate both brains and behinds. *Ayana Byrd*

N.E.R.D: TERRY RICHARDSON; NDEGEOCELLO: SATYA & DAVID FENTON



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BOOM SHOTS

BY ROB KENNER

Born September 11, 1975, O'Neil Bryan grew up in Seaview Gardens, a desolate part of western Kingston. A friend named Crack Skull began calling him Dumbo Elephant because of his big ears. Actually, his nose is pretty big too, to say nothing of his voice—a gravelly roar that shreds the eardrums and warms the blood of raggamuffin youths from Jamaica to Japan. These days he's known as **ELEPHANT MAN**, and that voice of his is the most powerful force in dancehall.

"I'm glad for the success, and me give thanks to God," says Elephant Man while driving through Kingston toward his new condo with a swimming pool. But as the saying goes, an elephant never forgets. "We always remember where we come from still—no matter whet e gwan." Had you dropped by King Jammy's studio in Waterhouse during the early '90s, you might have found yourself surrounded by Elephant Man and other assorted members of his roughneck family, the Scare Dem Crew. Their totally appropriate name came from a big tune by their friend and fellow Seaview resident Bounty Killer. "All of us get fight down, but we put in 'nuff work and try get out of the ghetto," says Elephant.



He went his own way, precipitating a messy breakup with Scare Dem. But just like an elephant, he has trampled every obstacle in his peth. One part DMX, with a splash of Ol' Dirty Bastard, Elephant Man is the stampeding wild man of dancehall. The title cut of his latest and strongest album, *Log On* (Greensleeves), is the biggest tune in Jamaica, complete with a dance of the same name. The beats are hard core, and Elephant's raw energy explodes through all 22 tracks. Some of the songs are spiked with BET-friendly hooks (a jigger of Jigga here, dash of Diddy there). It's a familiar tactic from his Scare Dem days that is sometimes a bit tiresome. But for some reason, when Elly lisps "shizzle my nizzle" on a dancehall track, it's not as corny as it is bizarre.

On a trip to England last November, the day before he was supposed to shoot his video for "Log On," Elephant Man was robbed in the parking lot of the Plaza Hotel in London. He lost all his jewelry and more than $23,000 in cash—mostly earned by voicing dubplates. One of his traveling companions, a British radio jock called DJ Village, was shot dead. Elephant returned home without making his video, shaken but glad to be alive, to rip another show, and live another dream.

HEAVY ROTATION: MORE REGGAE FLAVOR

SPRAGGA BENZ *Thug Nature* (Red Square)
VARIOUS ARTISTS *Darker Than Blue: Soul From Jamdown 1973–1980* (Blood and Fire)
SISTER CAROL *Direct Hit!* (Catapult)
TURBULENCE *Rising* (VP)
DON YUTE *Adrenaline* (Golden Child/Tony Mercedes)

JOI
STAR KITTY'S REVENGE
UNIVERSAL



Joi is not the kind of woman who needs an invitation. Arriving fashionably late to today's soul scene, she not only crashes the party, but brings her own psychedelic favors. Joi is equal parts superhero and singer, and her sexy, sagacious persona burns like acid on record.

On *Star Kitty's Revenge*, the badass Atlanta resident uses her dusky soprano to tell it like it is, musing on sexual freedom and emotional fulfillment against a backdrop of spare punk funk. Praise Goddess, she proves that for all the preaching and philosophizing that nu-soul sistas do, they bone too—"Lick" is a P-Funktified ode to clitoral stimulation. Equally delicious are the guitar-pluck bump of "It's Your Life" and the seductive, midtempo stunner "What If I Kissed You Right Now," which unfurls from drumbeat to dirty-bass groove to minor-chord Rhodes line like the petals of a blood orchid. But it ain't all earthly delights. Grieving is explored on "Jefferson St. Joe," Joi's tender elegy to her late father. And the song "You're a Whore" (sure to be a sing-along classic among NBA wives) proves that Joi is not a woman to mess with. This big girl doesn't cry—she brings the noise. *Sun Singleton*

THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS
COME WITH US
ASTRALWERKS



Ed Simons (left) and Tom Rowlands

As one of the most hyped and overexposed British club acts of the last decade, the Chemical Brothers should have switched to autopilot by now. But the pasty bastards have gone and made an album that is actually quite magnificent. Fluid melodies surge forth, fuzzy symphonic loops cascade down, and plaintive tribal rhythms percolate wildly—and that's just within the first two minutes of *Come With Us*, the duo's fourth full-length effort.

Rather than retiring to their country estates and letting their vast arsenal of synthesizers and samplers do all the work (Hello, Fatboy Slim! Hello, Orbital!), the Chemical Brothers have made a determined effort to avoid midcareer mediocrity. They resuscitate '80s electro with the stark Bambaataa-inspired "It Began in Afrika"; revisit the hazy glory of the trippy '60s on the pastoral "Star Guitar"; and make their longtime cohort, British folksinger Beth Orton, sound like a thousand angels on the truly astral "The State We're In." As if that's not enough, they venture into arena-rock territory with "The Test," which features lighter-raising vocals from the Verve's former singer Richard Ashcroft.

It's an incredible trip. And in the end, it confirms the Chemical Brothers were worthy all along.
Aidin Vaziri

JOI: ASBURY PARK FOR CANARY YELLOW INC.; CHEMICAL BROTHERS: KEVIN WESTENBERG

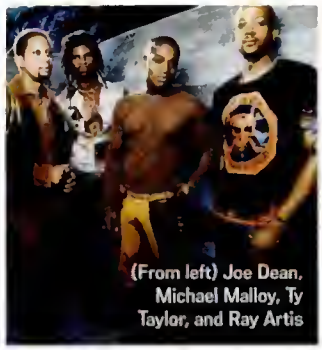


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DAKOTA MOON
A PLACE TO LAND
ELEKTRA
OC


(From left) Joe Dean, Michael Malloy, Ty Taylor, and Ray Artis

On its second album, this terminally bright-ayad and bushy-tailed foursome doles out more funky pop grooves coated with sugary pop vocals. Earnest and energetic, Dakota Moon draws on modern rumpshakers like Ricky Martin while miming the tics of the Beatles and the Eagles. Indeed, tha album's bast track, the skittish, bluesy nugget "Lonely Days," is the one that sounds tha least contemporary.

Unfortunately, most of *A Place to Land* is cheesier than the lasagna at Sbarro. The *fromage* factor starts with the jerky, stuttering verse of the titla track, which quickly gives way to a swelling chorus that could be used to sell Budweiser. Of course, Dakota Moon wears its commercial aspirations on its collective sleeve—this is the band that signed up as tha voica of Pepsi long before it had any credibility to losa. Evan so, when lead singer Michael Malloy lets loose on the chorus of "I'd Be a Fool," ona can't help but wish ha'd put his impressive pipes to better use than braying hackneyed lyrics like "I'd be a fool to let you go." When the band attempts to rock harder, as on "Don't Give Up on Me," things go from bland to worse. Mall rats fiending for cheese will find plenty to munch on here. *Dimitri Erhlich*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
WOW GOSPEL 2002
VERITY/EMI
OOOO



From the 78 RPM record to the compact disc, from tabernacle pew to bar stool, the history, gestalt, and raison d'être of black music in America can be explained in two words: "sacred" and "profane." The twain never met until the 1930s, when gospel music came to the fore and gave the righteous a license to ill on Sunday mawnin', with no apology. In 2002, contemporary gospel is the spiritual yin to black pop's secular yang.

WOW Gospel 2002 brilliantly sums up the state of the art via 30 of last year's cream tracks. Disc 1 showcases the current and future leaders of new-millennium gospel music. Proof: the heights of stylistic diversity, lyrical sophistication, and vocal audacity everybody here rises up to. One Nation Crew featuring Kirk Franklin's sanctified Spanglish hip hop ("Unconditional") and Kim Burnell's Latin house storm ("Victory [Live]"), among many others, expand the gospel canon.

The second CD covers the music of progressive gospel choirs, from Bishop TD Jakes & the Potters House Mass Choir's roller-disco bop ("When My Season Comes") to the Christianaires' delirious mixture of '70s Memphis party funk, soul harmonies, and fiery testimony ("Stand Up"). Regardless of your religious affinities, *WOW Gospel 2002* is worth a listen. Bow down on the good foot. *Tom Terrell*


Corey

COREY
I'M JUST COREY
MOTOWN
OOO

This gifted ATL shorty may be only 4'11", but he stands head and shoulders above most child singers. Both humble and personal, Corey's debut showcases his sweet soprano as he tells engaging PG-13 tales in a cutesy musical style that recalls Miami's equally charming Sammie. A melancholy piano laces "First Time," an ode to puppy love, while a Spanish guitar enlivens the ballad "If I Was Older." The radio-ready ditty "Hush Li'l Lady" coats a lullaby with a sugary bass then sprinkles it with rhymes by Lil' Romeo. If you can stomach a sweetness overload, Corey's tunes are better than a banana split with a cherry on top. *Angie Romero*

SOURCE OF LABOR
STOLEN LIVES
SUB VERSE
OOC

Nowadays, Seattle is better known for Ichiro Suzuki's Gold Gloves than for catching wreck, but Source of Labor's debut improves their hometown's hip hop game. Wordsayer delivers counter-culturally relevant rhymes on "Never Your Less" with his choppy, Silkk the Shocker–esque flow. Negus I's production is often muddled—plodding programmed beats and keyboard loops—but Wordsayer's politically aware lyrics bump SOL's batting average back up to .300. The time spent repping the 206 on "Wetlands" and "Emerald City," and dedications to Wordsayer's wife and son, make this outing a progressive family affair. *Dalton Higgins*

JAGUAR WRIGHT
DENIALS, DECISIONS, AND DELUSIONS
MOTIVE/MCA
OOOO

When Ms. Jaguar Wright takes the stage and her contralto begins to channel a soul-sonic force, audiences witness something divine. It's hard to imagine anyone capturing that spirit on record, but on her debut, Wright does just that. She walks the line between straight-talking confessional and merciless man-bashing, and reminds us that pain can be proud and that bruises breed song. The single "Ain't Nobody Playin," featuring Black Thought, offers her signature take-no-mess attitude, punctuated by a low-slung Scott Storch beat. "Self Love" is inspirational, a shimmering nine-minute revelation about finding God within. Wright wears her heart in her throat, and wears it well. *Laura Checkoway*

DAKOTA MOON: ZOREN GOLD; COREY: MICHAEL LAVINE

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(L-r): Ra Night Club owner Billy Richardson hangs out with special guest DJ Clue and friend at Tanqueray's VIBE.



In the VIP Room, Chris Abbott (on right) of US Concepts kept the Tanqueray 10 Gin flowing, while the bartender whipped up special cocktails for Tanqueray's VIBE.

Photos: Kim J. Ford

BABY S
STREET FRACTIONS
RUTHLESS/EPIC
OOOC



Baby S is more than just a gangata. Best known for his appearance on Kurupt's smoothed-out-but-G'd-up 1998 hit "Wa Can Freak It," thia skilled, Los Angeles–based rapper makes a crater-sized mark on the hip hop map with his dynamic debut. While many street poets just focus on thair naighborhoods' perpetually hot blocks, Baby S demonstrates that he's interested in more than throwing up gang signs, buating gats, jacking fools, and dealing with baby-mama drama.

On the reflective "Didn't Ask to Be a Gangsta," for axampla, he tells the sad tale of unwitting victims of the gang-banging lifestyle. But don't call him soft—the Step-produced, boast-heavy lead single, "I'm Ghetto," rocks herder than AC/DC thanka to a thumping backdrop. Step also contributes a cross-country batch of baata to thia collection, ranging from Southern bounce to signature California aynths to East Coast–atyla druma.

Although Baby S ridea solo for much of his album, cameo king Kokane blesses the survival anthem "Get Ur Paper," whila Compton pioneer King T joins him on the stone-cold Cali ode "Gangsta Crew." All in all, Baby S's well-rounded *Street Fractions* tips the acale in hia favor.

Soren Baker

CITIZEN COPE
CITIZEN COPE
DREAMWORKS
OOOC



Though hip hop has become as established, bloated, and predictable as corporate rock, interesting work is happening at its margins. Once a member of hip hop footnote Basehead, Citizen Cope, né Clarence Greenwood, has a history with experimental rap. Like a skateboarder who catches hold of moving buses, he borrows from rap's momentum without conforming to the genre's limitations on his solo debut.

"Contact," featuring Meshell Ndegeocello on bass, is a moody, funky meditation on the age-old African-American question: If it's called the justice system, why is it just us in prison? But Cope doesn't limit himself to a rant against racism. "If There's Love" is a slow emotional confession, and "Mistaken I.D." ponders the challenge of finding your own path.

"Let the Drummer Kick," with its nuanced turntable scratching and minimal instrumentation, is as close to hip hop as the album gets. But lyrics like "Humiliation / Reincarnation / Situation / Elation" are more Bob Dylan than dead prez. While Cope populates his songs with the street hustlers and addicts of hard-core rap, his music may not appeal to many hip hop heads. There's too much folky noodling, ambiguity, and musical eclecticism for this album to connect with anyone whose main love isn't old-school songs. *Dimitri Ehrlich*

BABY S: IMAGE LUMUMBA; COPE: CHRISTIAN LANTRY



X-ECUTIONERS: (From left) Total Eclipse, Roc Raida, Mista Sinista, and Rob Swift

X-ECUTIONERS
BUILT FROM SCRATCH
LOUD

The guest list for X-ecutioners' major-label debut is as eclectic as your average crate of vinyl—which figures, since the group includes four of the planet's most decorated DJs. But whether they're banging heads with Linkin Park, matching label mate Xzibit's serious verses, or revisiting "Genius of Love" with Tom Tom Club, the turntable wizardry of Rob Swift, Roc Raida, Total Eclipse, and Mista Sinista is never overshadowed by the hired help. Sometimes the acrobatic cuts are integrated into structured songs, and sometimes the 1200s blaze the way alone ("A Journey Into Sound"). No matter what X-ecutioners build with their scratches here, the results are rocking—and rock solid. *Dan LeRoy*

FELIX DA HOUSECAT
KITTENZ AND THEE GLITZ
EMPEROR NORTON

Felix da Housecat's latest pays homage to the decade of his adolescence, when the veteran DJ/producer was a 14-year-old Chicago house prodigy. Felix waxes nostalgic over the sounds of Reagan-era glitz and trashy Euro-disco, and still manages to write catchy sing-along songs. On "Madame Hollywood," a purposefully droning synth melody backs a woman's dadaist paean to fame. While it sends up '80s art-scene indifference and obsession with downtown glamour, the tune, like many on this album, bops with timeless pop sparkle. Meanwhile, songs like "Glitz Rock" evoke the robotic dance-floor motions of Kraftwerk, proving this album's musicality with tongue planted firmly in cheek.

Joseph Patel

HENRI SALVADOR
ROOM WITH A VIEW
BLUE NOTE

Forget the fact that Salvador, 84, was a variety-show host in France. What's more important is that he was raised when Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington reigned supreme, and that his motherland is one of the few countries that still give jazz its proper respect. *Room With a View* is 14 tracks of Salvador's tranquil tenor—in English, French, and Portuguese—gliding over cymbal-heavy horn, piano, and harmonica arrangements that cover the spectrum between bossa nova and lounge. It's rare that music can be described as pretty, but this is one instance in which that adjective couldn't be more appropriate. *Oj Lima*



Felix da Housecat

FELIX: DAVID TITLOW

One Love







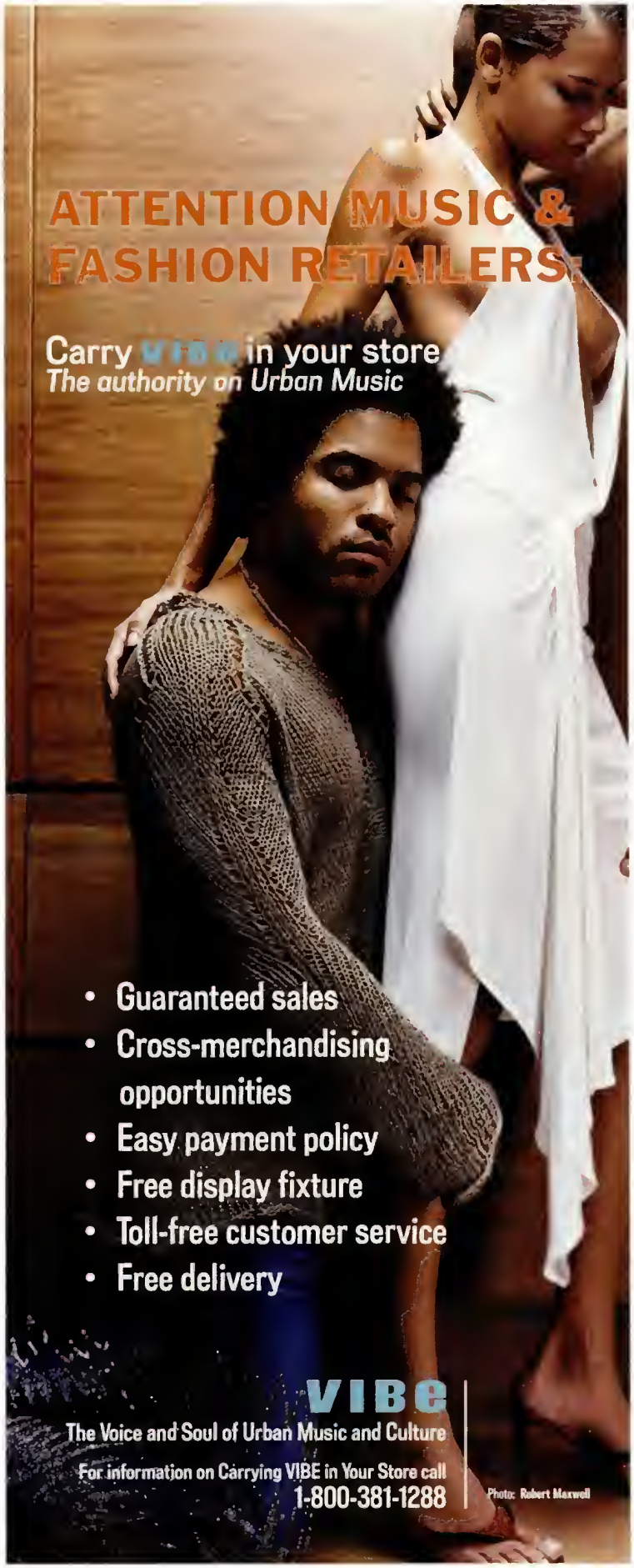
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THE DETAILS

GEAR: "EXTRA, EXTRA"

PAGE 88: (From left) Gold "Dolce & Gabbana" earrings by **Dolce & Gabbana,** available at Dolce & Gabbana, N.Y.C.; white leather shoulder bag, $275, by **Kenneth Cole New York** (for more information, please call 800 KEN-COLE or 877-REACTION or go to *www.reactiononline.com*); monogrammed canvas patchwork mini bag, $2,000, by **Louis Vuitton** (for more information, please call 866-VUITTON); blue sunglasses by **Emporio Armani;** white, burgundy, and black leather Prajne low-cut sneakers, $510, by **Yohji Yamamoto,** available at Yohji Yamamoto, N.Y.C.; white fedora, $250, by **Fendi,** available at Fendi, N.Y.C.; burgundy street chic boots, $1,355, by **Christian Dior,** available at Christian Dior boutiques nationwide; white light cotton-satin holster, $210, by **Helmut Lang,** available at Helmut Lang, N.Y.C.

VIBEFASHION: "MODERN LOVE"

PAGES 150-151: Pink silk dress by **Christian Dior;** blue topaz ring, $1,550, by **Dole Novick Ltd.** (for more information, please call 516-248-1600). Black perforated vest, $403, by **Costume National Homme,** available at Costume National, N.Y.C.; blue denim low-rise jeans by **Levi's;** black leather cap by **Tom Ford for Gucci;** stainless steel watch, $1,050, by **Tag Heuer** (for more information, please call 800-321-4832 or go to *www.tagheuer.com*).

PAGE 152: Green, brown, and white chiffon dress, $566, and jeans, both by **Just Cavalli;** suede sash belt by **Iceberg;** brown leather bag with fringe by **Bottega Veneta;** gold multistrand necklace, $860, by **Dolce & Gabbana,** available at Dolce & Gabbana, N.Y.C.; brown wood cuff with stone detail by **Mark Davis.**

PAGE 153: Nude silk chiffon keyhole dress with cape by **Kenneth Cole New York;** gold multichain hoop earrings, $185, and link "Coco" necklace, $145, both by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C.

PAGE 154: Black silk hole-knit V-neck, $825, and caffe chiffon crochet shredded skirt, $1,195, both by **Tom Ford for Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche,** available at Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche, N.Y.C.; bone leather corset clutch, $200, by **Jennifer Scott for Apropa,** available at Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C.; gold hoop earring by **Nine West Jewelry;** white cuff by **Alex and Ani.**

PAGE 155: Pink chiffon dress with multicolored ribbon belt, $1,880, by **Dolce & Gabbana,** available at Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C.; diamond and tanzanite Sabi ring, $81,542, by **Henry Dunay;** diamond necklace (worn as anklet), $5,700, by **H.Stern,** available at H.Stern, N.Y.C. Champagne silk robe, $180, and boxers, $22, both by **Sean John,** available at Bloomingdale's N.Y.C.; silver necklace with cross pendant, $454, by **Costume National Homme,** available at Costume National, N.Y.C.; stainless steel watch, $350, by **ESQ,** available at Macy's, N.Y.C.

PAGE 158: White cotton eyelet embroidered dress by **Alexander McQueen.** Black mesh T-shirt, $80, by **Dolce & Gabbana Intimo;** gray leather drawstring pant, $1,655, by **Dolce & Gabbana;** black leather cuff by **Bottega Veneta.**

PAGE 157: White chiffon obi-top dress by **Tom Ford for Gucci;** diamond bracelet and ruby ring, both by **Ellegem by Ella Gafter;** black sandals by **Manolo Blahnik;** black leather wrist-strap wallet with sterling silver band, $330, by **Helmut Lang** (for more information, please go to *www.helmutlang.com*). Dark blue cashmere suit, $2,835, by **Helmut Lang;** red mesh T-shirt, $29, by **Tommy Jeans** (for more information, please call 888-TOMMY4U); white canvas belt by **Kenneth Cole New York;** black leather shoes, $410, by **Costume National Homme,** available at Costume National, N.Y.C.; rhinestone necklace, $695, by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-550-0005).

VIBESTYLE: "BORN IN THE U.S.A."

PAGES 158-159: (From left) Yellow and white nylon zip-front jacket, $380, gray pant, $460, visor, $132, and white sneakers, all by **Prada,** available at Prada, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 888-977-1900); white cotton sleeveless shirt, $23, by **Calvin Klein Underwear,** available at Macy's, N.Y.C. Tan cotton short-sleeve button-front shirt, $59, white T-shirt, $24, camouflage nylon vest, $98, and blue denim pant, $59, all by **Tommy Jeans** (for more information, please call 888-TOMMY-4U); tan boots by **Timberland.** Gray nylon hooded jacket, $104, and pant, $72, both by **Triple 5 Soul,** available at Triple 5 Soul, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.triple5soul.com*); black and gray sneakers by **Nike** (for more information, please call 800-344-NIKE or go to *www.nike.com*); red visor, $28, by **Rocawear,** available at Dr. Jay's, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.rocawear.com*); black leather fingerless glove, $28, by **Marc Ecko,** available at Canal Jeans, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.ecko.com*). White leather motorcycle jacket by **Versus,** available at Versace, N.Y.C.; gray cotton sleeveless hooded pullover, $58, and pant, $58, both by **Mecca USA** (for more information, please go to *www.meccausa.com*); white leather sneakers by **Marc Ecko** (for more information, please go to *www.ecko.com*); white terry-cloth headband by **Nike** (for more information, please call 800-344-NIKE or go to *www.nike.com*). White cotton scoop-neck sweatshirt, $130, and black miniskirt, $130, both by **D&G,** available at D&G, N.Y.C.; white and blue sneakers by **Puma** (for more information, please go to *www.puma.com*); white terry-cloth armbands, both by **Nike** (for more information, please go to *www.nike.com*); gold chain belt, $185, by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-550-0005); gold bamboo earrings, $80, by **Jason's Jewelry.** Black mesh tank top, $98, and hot pants, $68, both by **DKNY,** available at DKNY, N.Y.C.; red mesh bra by **Victoria's Secret;** white suede sneakers, $190, by **Marc Jacobs,** available at Marc Jacobs, N.Y.C.; gold hoop earrings with logo, $185, and belt, $185, both by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-550-0005); red terry-cloth armband by **Nike** (for more information, please call 800-344-NIKE or go to *www.nike.com*).

THE DETAILS

PAGE 160: (From left) Black hooded pullover, $69, and pant, $59, both by **Fubu,** available at Macy's, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.fubu.com*); red and black terry-cloth headbands, $12, both by **Rocawear,** available at Dr. Jay's, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.rocawear.com*). Red and white terry-cloth tube top, $28, and red and blue knit shorts, $42, both by **Ecko Red,** available at Macy's, N.Y.C.; gold hoop earrings with logo, $185, by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-550-0005).

PAGE 161: (From left) Gray nylon hooded jacket, $104, and pant, $72, both by **Triple 5 Soul,** available at Triple 5 Soul, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.triple5soul.com*); red visor, $26, by **Rocawear,** available at Dr. Jay's, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.rocawear.com*); black fingerless glove, $28, by **Marc Ecko,** available at Canal Jeans, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.ecko.com*). White leather motorcycle jacket, $850, by **Versus,** available at Versace, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 888-3VERSACE or go to *www.versace.com*); white denim skirt, $44, by **J.Lo,** available at Macy's, N.Y.C.; white sneakers by **Puma** (for more information, please go to *www.puma.com*).

PAGE 162: (From top left) Ten cotton short-sleeve button-front shirt, $59, white T-shirt, $24, camouflage nylon vest, $98, and blue denim pant, $59, all by **Tommy Jeans** (for more information, please call 888-TOMMY-4U). Polka-dot dolman-sleeve top, $89, and blue denim shorts, $129, both by **Diesel** (for more information, please call 877-4-334-3735 or go to *www.diesel.com*); black terry-cloth wristbands, $12, both by **Rocawear;** oval green beryl ring, $6,360, by **Slane & Slane,** available at Slane & Slane, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 877-854-3804); gold hoop earrings with logo, $185, by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-550-0005). Gray cotton sleeveless hooded pullover, $58, and pant, $58, both by **Mecca USA** (for more information, please go to *www.meccausa.com*); white cotton long-sleeve shirt by **Nautica Jeans Co.;** white sneakers by **Marc Ecko** (for more information, please go to *www.ecko.com*); black messenger bag, $36, by **Triple 5 Soul,** available at Triple 5 Soul, N.Y.C (for more information, please go to *www.triple5soul.com*); black fingerless glove by **Reebok;** white terry-cloth headband by **Nike** (for more information, please call 800-344-NIKE or go to *www.nike.com*). Blue velour zip-front jacket (part of sweat suit), $142, gray cotton T-shirt, $26, and hat, all by **Akademiks;** white do-rag, $12, by **Rocawear,** available at Dr. Jay's, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.rocawear.com*); MP3 headphones, $249, by **Samsung** (for more information, please go to *www.samsungyepp.com*).

PAGE 163: (From left) Black mesh tank top, $98 and hot pants, $68 both by **DKNY,** available at DKNY, N.Y.C.; red bra by **Victoria's Secret;** gold hoop earrings, $185, and belt with logo, $615, both by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-550-0005); red terry-cloth armband by **Nike** (for more information, please call 800-344-NIKE or go to *www.nike.com*). White cotton scoop-neck shirt, $130, and miniskirt, $130, both by **D&G,** available at D&G, N.Y.C.; white armband, $12, by **Rocawear,** available at Dr. Jay's, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.rocawear.com*); gold chain belt, $185, by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-550-0005); gold bamboo earrings, $60, by **Jason's Jewelry.**

PAGE 164: Red cotton sleeveless top, $42, and shorts, $45, both by **Rocawear,** available at Dr. Jay's, N.Y.C. (for more information, please go to *www.rocawear.com*); blue denim and suede shirt, $76, and shorts, $69, both by **Davoucci** (for more information, please call 888-DAVOUCCI or go to *www.davoucci.com*); gray waffle-knit long-sleeve shirt, $18, by **Armani Jeans** (for more information, please go to *www.emporioarmani.com*).

PAGE 165: Yellow and white nylon zip-front jacket, $380, gray pant, $460, visor, $132, and white sneakers, $280, all by **Prada,** available at Prada, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 888-977-1900); white cotton sleeveless shirt, $23, by **Calvin Klein Underwear,** available at Macy's, N.Y.C.

VIBEFACE: "SOFT GEOMETRY"

PAGE 166: Fluorescent green cap-sleeved dress by **Jean Paul Gaultier,** available at Barney's New York; gold bow and heart earring by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-550-0005).

PAGE 168: Pink, black, and white striped cotton halter by **Chanel,** available at Chanel, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-550-0005); black hoop earrings by **Michael & Hushi.**

PAGE 169: Black mesh one-sleeve top with ribbon, $320, by **D&G,** available at D&G, N.Y.C.; peacock brooch by **Michael & Hushi.**

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NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Game open only to U.S. residents age 18 or older. Game void where prohibited by law. Game starts on or about February 1, 2002, and is scheduled to end on June 30, 2003.

HOW TO PLAY. Look for a potential winning game piece inside specially marked regular tins of Altoids Peppermint, Cinnamon or Wintergreen flavors. If you find a regular tin that contains a potential winning game piece, you win the prize indicated, subject to verification. Non-winning specially marked regular tins **WILL NOT CONTAIN** a game piece or notice of any kind inside.

PRIZE CLAIMS. Sign your potential winning game piece, and type or print the following information on a 3"x 5" card/paper: your full name, complete address with ZIP Code, date of birth, and day/evening phone numbers with area codes, and mail along with the potential winning game piece in a business size (#10) envelope to: Altoids Muscle Car Game, P.O. Box 27172, Golden Valley, MN 55427-0172. Prize claim must be mailed via certified mail (return receipt requested) and must include original potential winning game piece. Retain a photocopy of your game piece for your records. All prize claims must be received by June 30, 2003. Upon verification, winners will be notified by mail.

ALTERNATE METHOD OF PARTICIPATION. To participate without purchase, hand print your full name, complete address with ZIP Code, date of birth, and day/evening phone numbers, with area codes, on a 3"x 5" card/paper, insert into a business size (#10) envelope and mail to: Altoids Muscle Car Game — Game Play Request, P.O. Box 3311, Maple Plain, MN 55593-3311, to be received by June 30, 2003. One game play per request; one request per outer mailing envelope. No mechanical reproductions or photocopies of requests will be accepted. The independent judging organization will play for you and notify you by mail **ONLY** if you are a potential winner.

PRIZES/APPROXIMATE RETAIL VALUE (ARV)/ODDS OF WINNING. Three (3) Prizes: A choice of (a) a check in the amount of $40,000 OR (b) a "muscle car." In the event winner chooses a muscle car, Sponsor shall purchase a previously owned automobile, after consultation with winner, up to a maximum Purchase Price of $40,000. "Purchase Price" includes cost of the car, plus sales tax, licensing and registration fees, and, if applicable, delivery charges from dealership to winner's place of residence. Prize will be awarded "as is" and winner agrees to look solely to manufacturer or dealership with respect to any warranties and guarantees related to the "muscle car" prize. ARV: $40,000 each. Odds of winning: 1:3,333,934. Total ARV of all prizes: $120,000. Unclaimed prizes will not be awarded.

CONDITIONS ON PRIZES. Potential winners will be required to execute and return an Affidavit of Eligibility, Release of Liability and a Publicity Release, where legal, within 14 days of date of congratulatory letter. Failure to return all executed documents within the allotted time may result in disqualification and prize forfeiture. All taxes on prizes are solely the responsibility of prizewinners. Acceptance of prize offered constitutes permission to use winner's name and/or likeness for advertising/trade purposes without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Prizes will be awarded within 8–10 weeks after verification of prize claim. No substitution of prize permitted, unless prize is generally unavailable, in which case a prize of equal or greater value will be substituted, at discretion of Sponsor.

VERIFICATION. All game pieces are subject to verification. Game pieces are void and will be rejected if not obtained through authorized, legitimate channels or if any part is illegible, mutilated, altered, counterfeited or tampered with in any way, or if materials contain printing, production, typographical, mechanical or other errors. If because of error (or for any other reason) there are more prize claims than prizes offered as stated in these Official Rules, a random drawing will be held from among all eligible claimants to award only the number of prizes as stated in these Official Rules. In no event will Sponsor be liable for more than the stated number of prizes in these Official Rules. Any attempt to defraud Sponsor or the official judging agency in any way will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and person(s) attempting same will be disqualified and ineligible for prizes.

ELIGIBILITY. The following categories of persons are not eligible to participate or win: employees of Sponsor, its advertising and promotion agencies and their respective parent companies, affiliates, subsidiaries, sales representatives or distributors and persons who are members of the immediate family or who reside in the same household as persons in any of the above categories.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION. By participating, participants agree to abide by and be bound by the Official Rules and all decisions of the judges, which are final and binding in all respects. Submission of game materials including but not limited to prize claims is solely the responsibility of the participant. Sponsor and its agencies are not responsible for late, lost, misdirected, damaged, illegible, delayed, destroyed, incomplete or postage-due mail, game play requests or prize claims. All game materials submitted become the sole property of the Sponsor and will not be returned. Winning game pieces and/or prizes may not be assigned or transferred prior to award. In the event of non-compliance with the requirements set forth in these Official Rules, prize may be forfeited. Limit 1 prize per individual, family or household.

WAIVER. By entering this promotion, participant waives all rights to claim punitive, incidental and consequential damages, attorneys' fees or any damages other than actual out-of-pocket costs incurred to enter.

WINNERS LIST. For a list of winners, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Altoids Muscle Car Game — Winners List, P.O. Box 3312W, Maple Plain, MN 55593-3312. Sponsor: Kraft Foods North America, Inc., Northfield, IL 60093.

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PEACE

"Yo, what happened to 'Peace'?"—"Paid In Full," Eric B. & Rakim, 1987

At a time when we've seen airplanes slam into buildings, poison spores seep out of envelopes, and bombs rain down on ravaged lands, Eric B.'s question seems more pressing than ever. While the word "peace" has long been used by hip hoppers as a greeting and a parting, its primary meaning (according to *Webster's*, "a state of tranquility or quiet; freedom from civil disturbance; or a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom") is in short supply worldwide.

Hip hop, for all its conflicts and contradictions, has ample history with the concept. In the late '70s, Afrika Bambaataa transformed his South Bronx street gang, the Black Spades, into the nonviolent Zulu Nation—replacing knife fights with "battles" in the arts of deejaying, emceeing, break-dancing, and graffiti. In 1989, KRS-One's Stop the Violence Movement birthed the all-star hit single "Self Destruction" and its West Coast counterpart "We're All in the Same Gang" (1990)—high watermarks during the short-lived era of conscious rap. And even as bloodthirsty gangsta groups began clipping the white dove's wings, Houston's notorious Geto Boys weighed in against Operation Desert Storm with 1991's straight-talking "Fuck a War."

From international affairs to interpersonal relations, peace is easier said than done. "Piece of what?" asked Large Professor back in 1991. "You can't mean 'P-E-A-C-E' / 'Cuz I seen people in the streets / Shoot the next man and turn around and say, 'Peace.'" The Main Source mastermind had it right on "Peace Is Not the Word to Play." Paying lip service to such an important idea, while flaunting it with our actions, is the epitome of hypocrisy. "Shalom," say the Israelis, "Salaam," the Palestinians. And while similarities in sound speak to a shared history and common ground, extremists in both camps keep dragging the word through the dirt.

We all know it deserves better. It deserves respect, the maximum kind. There has never been a better time to give peace its due—its propers. Say it, don't play it.

Dove Bry

Illustration by **CHARLENE POTTS**



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